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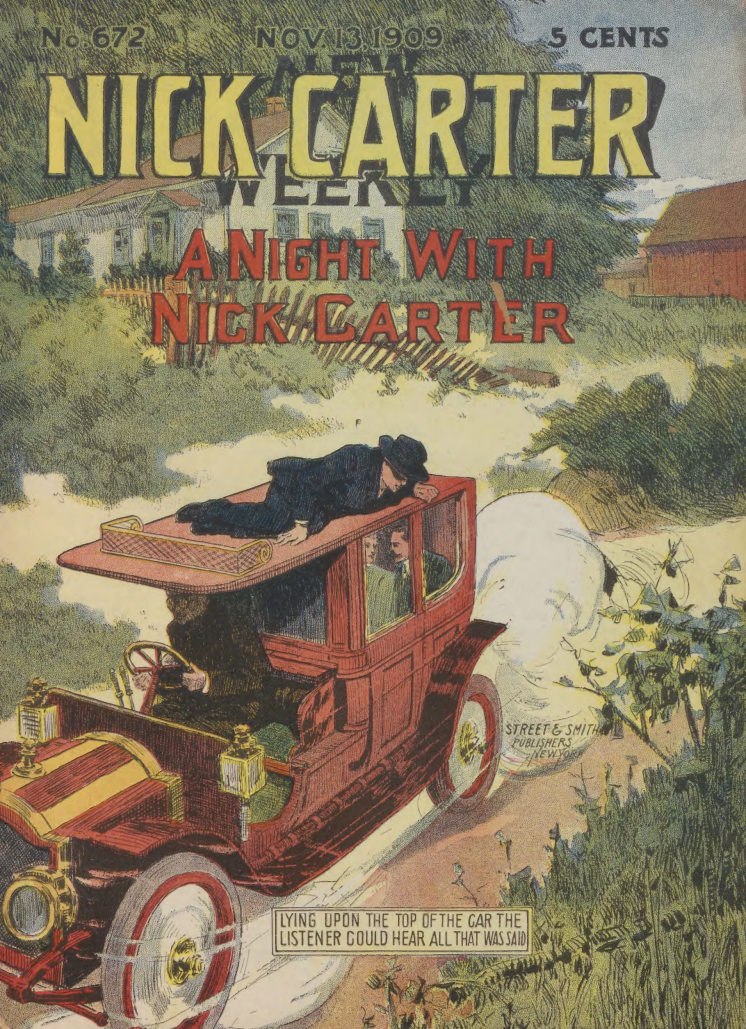
NICK CARTER WEEKLY

A NIGHT WITH NICK CARTER



NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

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A NIGHT WITH NICK CARTER

OR,

THE KID-GLOVED CASE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

MR. PHIL ARNOT'S PROBLEM.

In the long rear room, almost the width of Nicholas Carter's house on Madison Avenue, in the City of New York, and on the second floor, which was used by the famous detective as his main business office, there was a single light burning—the green-shaded drop light on the great work table that occupied the central position in the room.

Nick Carter himself was at the table, with a shade over his eyes, having been running over some reports of several of his assistants in a case then in hand, that of a pawnbroker, Jacob Feltman. It was early—directly after dinner, in fact—and the detective had looked forward to an evening of leisure, a most infrequent occurrence with him.

Just as he had docketed the papers and slipped them into a drawer, which locked with a spring, Joseph, his faithful servant, came in with a card on a tray. Nick sighed as he saw it, and reached wearily for the pasteboard.

"No rest for the wicked, they say, Joseph," he said. "Who is it now?"

"A gentleman who came in a large car. The car is waiting around the corner; he got out of it and walked to the house," said the butler with precision. "He dresses a little loud, sir—or so I should consider. Not just in the best taste; his vest is too fancy and he wears too much jewelry. But it is good jewelry," said Joseph reflectively.

"Wealth without natural refinement, eh, Joseph?" said Nick, staring at the card. Then he muttered: "'Mr. Philip Arnot'; humph!"

He arose and approached the tall cabinets between the windows of the room. "The name somehow reminds me of something. What is his personal appearance, Joseph?"

"Rather a tall man, sir; good figure; heavy mustache and hair of brown color; complexion, fresh; takes great care of his hands; uses perfumery, or scented soap, and very strong tobacco. His valet does not properly air his outer garments, sir," said the critical Joseph.

"Who is in the other room?" asked Nick brusquely, running over the card catalogue he kept of both notable and "notorious" characters, confining himself to the letter "A."

"Mr. Chickering is reading there, sir."

"Ask him to bring his book in behind the screen, as you go down. Wait two minutes, and then bring Mr. Arnot up."

"Yes, sir."

Nick had found a particular card that interested him. He had snapped on a light at the cabinet and now by its aid he read half aloud as follows:

"'Arnot, Robert, editor and publisher; accompanied Kipling on Gloucester fishing smack to Grand Banks——' No! that's not the chap. Ah! here it is! 'Arnot, Philip; Chi. '74; in Drainage Building & Loan Co.; indicted for participation in that swindle; ind.

squashed, May, '07; New York same year. Int. in Bed Rock Bank, when that inst. closed doors. A sure-thing gambler. Unmarried; no family in N. Y.'"

"This must be the man," said Nick aloud.

There was a gentle rustle, seemingly at the farther end of the room, and the voice of Chickering Carter asked:

"What's doing, Nick?"

"I am going to have a visitor. I might need you to take notes; be ready, will you?" said the detective, crossing to the work table again.

"Certainly," replied his assistant, who was sitting behind the ceiling-high screen, which looked exactly like the wall of the room, but which masked the door into the front apartment on this floor of Nick's house. A beautiful copy of the "Greek Slave," which hung against this false wall, was so arranged that the watcher behind the screen could see through holes pierced in the downcast eyes of the figure in the picture. When Nick wished one of his assistants to take notice, or to watch whoever was in the main room, he signaled him by a push button under the carpet where he usually sat at the big table.

The detective had just seated himself comfortably again when Joseph softly knocked, and then opened the door and announced "Mr. Arnot."

The visitor was a breezy sort of a man; although some time from the Windy City, he still retained the "free and easy" manner assumed by a certain class of people from that big metropolis.

"Glad to meet you, Carter! This is indeed a pleasure," said the visitor, walking briskly across the room and offering his hand to the seated detective.

But at the instant Nick chanced to be busy "with both hands." In one he held his lighted cigar; with the other he reached to move the shade of the lamp so as to increase the light in the direction of the chair placed already at the end of the big table, and to which he nodded his caller. So he did not take the latter's hand.

"Be seated, Mr. Arnot," said the detective with that perfectly well-bred but emotionless tone which is a greeting, but always lacks any cordiality.

"Thanks!" cried the rather boisterous Arnot, without appearing to notice any failure to respond to his warmth on his host's part.

"Your business is——"

"Why, I'm a promoter; but just now——"

"You do not get my meaning," said Nick coldly. "Your business with me, I mean."

"Oh!" and Arnot *did* begin to feel the chill in the atmosphere. "You are all for business, Mr. Carter?"

"My time is valuable, sir."

Arnot smiled, reached into his pocket, brought forth a plethoric wallet, and from a packet of crisp bank-notes selected one that he laid without comment upon the table between them. Nick looked at it carelessly at first; then his eyebrows *did* go up a bit.

The bill was for a thousand dollars. The detective looked questioningly at his visitor.

"Is that a sufficient retainer, Carter?" asked Arnot. "I want a thousand dollars' worth of your time."

"I never accept a retainer until I know the nature of the work desired," replied Nick, unruffled. "If you wish to tell me your business, I will listen. We will discuss the payment afterward."

"We will put that up as a side bet, then," said the man, chuckling. "Put it away, and if you don't want to handle the case I've brought you, you can do what you please with it, Carter."

Nick flipped the bill into the drawer with his papers, and looked again at Arnot.

"Well?" he asked.

"I suppose you know me? They say you know everybody," said the man, with the first show of shrewdness he had made since entering the room.

"I am aware of your career," said Nick briefly.

"That shortens the introduction, then," returned Arnot, and evidently with relief. "Now, I haven't come to you on any matter of business—financial business, or anything like that, I mean. And I haven't been robbed. This is really a matter of sentiment, I suppose you will say."

"I would not malign you, Mr. Arnot," Nick said, with a grim smile.

"You think sentiment would be foreign to me?" returned the man good-naturedly. "Well, I don't claim to be very mushy."

"No?"

"But there's something in me beside my digestive works," added Arnot. "I make a few friends, and I usually keep 'em, Mr. Carter. But this is a particular matter——"

"You seem to wander," said Nick impatiently. "Can't you come to the point?"

"By thunder! It is hard. I'm no ladies' man, Carter; but this trouble of mine is all about a girl."

"Indeed? Your fiancée?"

"Aw, say! Do I look that mushy?" grumbled Arnot. "It's the girl that's been doing my letters and looking after my private correspondence. She's a distant relative of the family; her name is Arnot, too—Sadie Arnot. I've had her five months now, and I'd miss her like the very deuce. And I do miss her already!" finished the man, smiting the table suddenly. "I want her back. That is what I am here for, Carter."

"She is missing?"

"Since yesterday morning."

"And you have no idea where she is gone?"

"That's right."

"Why don't you go to the police and have an alarm sent out?"

"And get it in all the papers? That would be a nice trick to play on the girl," said Arnot with disgust. "Whatever she's done—er—I mean, whatever she has gone away for, she deserves to be kept out of the papers."

"Very considerate of you, Mr. Arnot," said Nick calmly. "But I am not in a position to advise you. You intimate that she has been lured away from you?"

"I don't know what you call it. There was no trouble between us. She never opened her mouth to me about leaving. She was all right at breakfast time yesterday morning. Then she walked out before the hour at which I open my mail, and I haven't seen her since."

"And you want to find her, of course?"

"I most certainly do! She was a valuable assistant to me, in the first place. Then, she's sort of friendless, and as she is in the family I—I feel that it's up to me to look out for her a bit," stammered the man in conclusion.

Nick looked at him in a way that would have betrayed the fact to one used to watching the detective that he was frankly puzzled. Finally he tapped his foot a couple of times on the carpet, saying meanwhile:

"You would better give me the details, in so far as you know them, of this young lady's disappearance, Mr. Arnot. I can better judge then whether it is worth my while to take up the case. Give me the full particulars, please."

CHAPTER II.

THE GIRL, THE MAN, AND THE AUTOMOBILE.

"Sadie Arnot came to me from her home down East," began Arnot reflectively. "I had never seen or heard of her before she walked into my business office one day, having fairly talked her way past the guard. I thought that was pretty smart for a slip of a young girl, so I listened to her.

"Mind you, I knew very well she was whom she said she was. I knew there were Arnots down in the Blue Nose country, and she is the very spittin' image of my mother when mother was her age. I've got a picture of mother, you see," and he drew forth a little case from another pocket and opened it so that Nick could view an old-fashioned daguerreotype of a peach-like young girl in the beruffled skirts and simple bonnet of the era before the Civil War.

"Put Sadie in those togs," said Arnot, "and she'd look for the world and all like that picture. I haven't any picture of Sadie—worse luck!

"Well, to tell her story: She had managed to get a normal-school education, and was booked for a teacher. She had taught one term and found it the most awful drudgery.

"Then she read my name in the paper. I reckon she didn't read much good of me," added Arnot ruefully. "The papers don't love me. But sometimes they tell some truth. Therefore Sadie learned that I had made money and that I was dabbling in a good many things. And that I was in New York.

"I tell you, I don't suppose old New Yorkers realize what a lodestone this city is for the people all over the country. Even if one lives in a good-sized town, he knows blamed well it isn't like New York, and he feels that nothing but New York will just satisfy his longing.

"That girl felt the same, she said. And the combination of a wealthy relative and New York was too much for her to resist. Besides, she's an orphan.

"So she hiked out for this city, and she got to see me right off the bat. I thought that was cute. Then she set out to tell me how much help she could be to me. Of course, I had a secretary—a confidential man. Says Sadie:

" 'Keep him. I don't want to take a job away from any poor man. I'll make my own job—and make you glad to pay me my salary, too!' And, by Jove!" added Arnot, "she did!"

"You are not getting to the point very fast, Mr. Arnot," interrupted Nick.

"That's right! But I wanted to tell you about her—how I got her. Sadie certainly is the goods!"

"You grew fond of her, in other words?"

"Humph! She's young enough to be my daughter, I guess. Anyway, I'm not a marrying man, Mr. Carter, and this little girl is as straight as a string."

"Please get down to cases," said the detective rather wearily.

"Eh?"

"You say she is missing. Tell me about her departure."

"Well! I took her home with me. You know I've got a pretty good ranch in East Fifty-seventh Street. Mrs. Garrity runs it for me; she's the mother of one of my managers—and a mighty nice old lady. So Sadie was safe with her."

"Yes?"

"As I said, it happened yesterday morning. I'm not shaved till after breakfast. During that process Sadie has been in the habit of sorting the mail that comes to the house. She opens most of it for me. Only a few particular letters are reserved for my private eye.

"Well, when I had been shaved by the man, I walked into the study where we work for an hour or two before I go downtown."

"This was at what hour?" interposed Nick.

"About a quarter to eight. That's the usual time. We breakfast at seven—unconscionably early, I suppose; but the day is never long enough."

"Proceed, Mr. Arnot."

"Well, I expected to find Sadie working at her desk."

"And she was not there?"

"That's right. She had gone into the room when we rose from breakfast. I knew that."

"And she had disappeared from the study?"

"Wait. I saw that she had been at work. She had opened about half the letters; there were the pile of unopened ones on the right of her chair, and about two dozen with slit envelopes on the left hand—all neatly piled. Her chair was pushed back and left

askew, just as though she had stepped out for a moment."

"Indeed?"

"She was as methodical as an automaton," declared Arnot. "If she had intended to leave the room for any extended time, she would have set the chair straight. That is her way; neat as a pin!"

"I see," said Nick, with some admiration of the quality of the man's power of observation.

"So she had just stepped out. I waited for her return, meanwhile running over the opened letters she had put aside for me. She didn't come back, and I rang. When the maid came I asked where Miss Arnot was. She said she had gone out. I couldn't believe her——"

"She went openly out of the house?"

"So the maid says. So the butler observed, too. Oh, I've put them all through the mill and got at such facts as they possess."

"And you have taken nobody else into your confidence?"

"Nobody but Mrs. Garrity and my secretary at the shop—Sam Loring."

"Continue," urged Nick.

"Well, it seems both the maid and the butler saw her coming down the stairs and going out of the front door. She only wrapped an automobile veil about her head, and she left the front door unlatched. That looks as though she only expected to be gone a moment, eh?"

Nick nodded.

"The maid was dusting in the hall. The housekeeper had called her down, I believe, for neglecting some of the carved work along the paneling. She went to the door, too, and looked after Miss Arnot."

"Ah!"

"Oh, I've traced poor Sadie's movements as far as they could be traced," declared Arnot. "The maid says she went along the block about halfway to the avenue. There an automobile was standing. It should be about three hundred and twenty-two or three hundred and twenty-four. The machine was headed away from the house. The maid did not notice its number.

"Sadie stopped beside the car and spoke with somebody inside. She only halted for half a minute. Then the door of the car swung open—it was a limousine—and Sadie stepped in."

"Of her own volition, then?" interposed Nick.

"It would seem so. It was broad daylight. She certainly was not kidnapped," declared Arnot.

"That would seem almost impossible," admitted the detective.

"Well, the car wheeled away the instant she got in. It turned the corner, and—that's all!"

"That is all you can tell me, do you mean?"

"Just so," said Arnot. "It was all I was able to learn myself."

"Wait!" commanded Nick thoughtfully. "The girl stepped into the machine without any urging; but did the maid who saw her have no inkling of who was inside the car?"

"No. She knew nothing——"

"But the car was partly glass-inclosed, of course?"

"I suppose so."

"Yet the maid saw nothing of whoever was in the limousine?"

"Hold on! she said somebody reached out and assisted Sadie in. Did not pull her in, mind you; just put a hand on her arm."

"Now, Mr. Arnot," said Nick, looking keenly at the man, "tell me one thing more. *Was it a male or a female hand that assisted the girl into the car?*"

For the first time Arnot showed absolute confusion. He stammered a bit, but finally blurted out, while the red surged into his face:

"Hang it all! it was a man. The maid saw his cuff, and the fact that the hand was large and wore no glove seemed to prove it true."

"But you were keeping that back?" said Nick sharply.

"Well——"

"You intentionally deceived me."

"Hang it all! I wanted you to go into the matter unprejudiced," declared Arnot desperately.

"Then you already have reason to believe that you have solved the mystery of the girl's disappearance?" cried the detective keenly.

"Humph! I am suspicious. I expect you to go into the case on its merits."

"What do you suspect?"

"If I tell you, I prejudice your mind, too," declared Arnot doggedly. "I am perfectly willing to pay a thousand dollars—and double that—for real information of Sadie's whereabouts. But I thought you should not be hampered by my suspicions."

"I cannot take up the case unless I know all the facts," said Nick with finality, and he opened the drawer in which the "retainer" lay.

"Hold on!" cried Arnot. "Don't be abrupt. I will tell you the little I suspect. And it's *mighty* little, and I've practically no reason for my suspicions, saving that Sadie is a mighty pretty girl, and I thought she was too good to last."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Nick quickly.

"She was so handy. She was such a great help. I expected something would happen to spoil it all. And I kept my eye out keen for chaps, too," said Arnot, with a rueful grin. "That's the objection I have always had to woman employees until I got Sadie. About the time they get to be useful, they up and get married!"

"So you fear it is an elopement?" asked Nick.

"That is my suspicion."

"Any particular reason for fearing it? Who is the man?"

"There you have me!" cried Arnot. "I wasn't aware that she knew anybody very well. As I said,

I've tried to keep the boys away from her. And she didn't seem to care much for them, anyway."

"Yet that is the only reason you can give for her disappearance?"

"That's the one that naturally came to my mind, because it is the thing I have feared," said Arnot.

Nick sat back in his chair, put the tips of his fingers carefully together, and looked long and silently at his visitor. His foot tapped another signal on the button under the carpet.

CHAPTER III.

SKIMMING THE CASE.

It was several minutes before Nick Carter spoke again. Finally he said softly:

"Would you like to have me tell you what I think about the young lady's disappearance—what I adduce from the meagre facts that you have given me, Mr. Arnot?"

"I certainly would," declared the visitor.

"In the first place," said Nick, "it is not an elopement."

"How do you know?" cried the other eagerly.

"I do not *know.* This is the opinion I draw from what you have told me. There may be a great many other facts to be discovered about Miss Arnot's departure; and those facts would change the entire complexion of the case. A detective can only work on the material in his hands. He is not supernatural!"

"Do you think I have intentionally hidden any of the facts, Carter?" demanded Arnot with some heat.

Nick Carter looked at him coldly and replied:

"If it served your purpose, sir, I believe you would do such a thing. You have asked for my opinion; there it is."

"Well, by Jove!" ejaculated Arnot, with rather an ugly laugh. "You certainly speak plainly."

"I do. Have you got enough? Do you want your money back?" asked Nick grimly.

"No, I don't!" cried Arnot, banging his fist upon the table. "You seem to doubt me. I want you to go into this thing and clear my skirts—whether you find Sadie or not."

Nick was silent again for several moments, and finally said:

"I will not give up the matter just here. I will probe a little deeper, at any rate. Would you care to hear *why* I do not see evidence of Miss Arnot's having eloped in the testimony you have brought me?"

"Sure!" said the visitor, evidently swallowing his anger with difficulty.

"In the first place," said Nick quietly, "you have yourself observed two things which should refute your suspicions."

"What are those?" demanded the Chicagoan with eagerness.

"You stated that Miss Arnot was a very methodical person, did you not?"

"That's right," admitted Arnot.

"Had she been intending to remain away from her desk she would have set her chair straight—perhaps cleaned up her desk thoroughly?"

"That's the thing that puzzles me!"

"And she left the front door on the latch?"

"She did."

"A second evidence of her intention to immediately return," said Nick. "Now, if this was an elopement case, she, being methodical, would have had everything arranged for her departure."

"Well——"

"A girl such as you say Miss Arnot is does not go about getting married without forethought. Have you had Mrs. Garrity examine her wardrobe?"

"Yes. Nothing seems to be missing. The maid waited on her, too, and she declared Sadie made no preparation for going away."

"It seems to me that disposes of your suspicion then, Mr. Arnot," said Nick. "What do you think yourself?"

"But, for Heaven's sake!" cried Arnot. "What did she go for, then?"

"That is the problem, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is. It is the thing I want you to find out, in connection with finding the girl, Carter."

Joseph entered, and Nick, who had been scribbling a line on a card, handed it without a word to the old servant, who softly left the room.

"You are positive," said Nick, drawing Arnot's attention from Joseph's departing back, "that Miss Arnot had few male friends in New York?"

"Why, I never introduced her to more than I could help. She knew young Sam Loring; but he's a married man and safe," and the man grinned. "She met several of the people from the shop. Garrity was one, but his mother would look out that he did not get ensnared in the toils of any woman."

"She knew no others?"

"Why—hold on; there's Studiford."

Nick did not move a muscle, nor did his eyes show the first gleam of emotion; but his mind leaped as under the spur.

"Who is Mr. Studiford?" he queried calmly.

"Clarry Studiford. I knew the boy in Chicago. He's trying to sell mines here, or something. And he's cut something of a dash in the Tenderloin, I believe. He was mixed up with some show girl or other—but that's all over now, I guess. I warned Sadie against him, however."

As it happened Clarence Studiford had played an important part in the case of Jake Feltman, the Hester Street fence, and Nick could not fail to be interested in the mere fact that the dashing young broker had been acquainted with the missing girl. But Nick kept this to himself. He said:

"Did she show any particular interest in this Mr. Studiford?"

"Not a bit. But I think he was hit rather hard by her. She's a pretty girl, you see."

"I observe that," said Nick.

"Mind you! I have no reason for suspecting Studiford."

"No? Then your idea that she might have eloped was a merely general suspicion?" asked the detective.

"That's right. I presume my fear of losing her assistance is at the root of my suspicion. But you seem to have proved that it could not be an elopement?"

"I have proved nothing," said Nick. "I have merely stated to what I consider the evidence so far points—that is, that it was not an elopement. She would have made some preparation for such a transaction. Even had the elopement been the result of a sudden decision, the girl would have run back to the house and made some changes in her apparel, or got some of her personal property. A young woman does not elope in a morning gown and an automobile veil. It is not in the nature of the sex."

"But what——"

"You have given me every atom of information in your possession?" asked Nick, looking at his visitor keenly.

"I have," declared the latter, and seemed to be honest enough about his statement.

"Then it seems that I can go no further without a closer inspection of the premises, Mr. Arnot. Of course, you will give me permission to interview your servants in my own way?"

"Certainly!"

Joseph entered the room and placed a folded paper before Nick, who opened it, read what was written theron, and, twisting the paper into a spill, lit it at the lamp, and ignited a fresh cigar in the blaze of it, allowing the paper to burn to ashes in the tray at his elbow.

"I will go with you at once," declared the detective.

"Then you will take the case?" cried Arnot with satisfaction.

"At least, I will look into it," admitted Nick, and he turned the key on the drawer which held the thousand dollar bill.

As Joseph met them in the lower hall with Nick's hat and coat, and handed Mr. Arnot his own hat, the detective asked:

"Have you a cab, Mr. Arnot?"

"I came downtown in a friend's machine," replied the visitor. "It went on. We can get a taxi at the stand on the avenue here."

"Quite true. Are you ready? Then we will go on."

They stepped out of the door and a slow-running touring car appeared around the first corner below, traveling up the avenue behind them as they walked toward the cabstand.

Anybody "in the know" would have recognized Danny, Nick Carter's chauffeur, under the wheel, and the single person in the tonneau looked wonderfully like Patsy Garvan.

Nick gave no indication that he noticed the machine. When he and Arnot diagonally crossed the avenue at the corner the detective gave no sign, either, that he saw a big limousine car standing in the side street. Its engine was running, and in a moment it was started and rolled smoothly out into Madison Avenue.

Nick had held his handkerchief in his hand. As the big machine swung around the corner and passed close to him he flashed a glance into the inclosed part of the big car. Then he dropped his handkerchief.

"Look out, Carter! that other car almost got you!" cried Arnot, urging the detective onto the sidewalk as the touring car with Danny at the wheel rolled by.

"Thanks!" murmured the detective. He glanced after the two machines; when the limousine took the turn toward Broadway Danny followed, and the chief went on with his companion, satisfied.

They found a taxi very easily, and were bowled uptown to East Fifty-seventh Street. They saw nothing of the two cars which had so attracted Nick's attention at the start.

Arnot kept up the conversation, offering suggestions, voicing his reiterated suspicion that Sadie Arnot had left him willingly and with premeditation, and otherwise chattering into the detective's ear. The latter did not even comment upon what his companion said.

And so they finally came to Mr. Phil Arnot's house.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POINT ARNOT OVERLOOKED.

It was a double house—twice the width of the ordinary New York "brownstone front"—of four stories and basement. A solemn, proper English butler met them in the hall.

"Any news, Marchant?" asked Mr. Arnot.

"No, sir," replied the man gravely. He overlooked Nick with the unseeing, yet observant, eye of the well-trained serving man.

"This is Mr. Carter, Marchant," said the multimillionaire in his brisk way. "You are free to talk to him openly."

"Yes, sir," repeated the butler, now looking at Nick directly.

"I should first like to be led to the room in which Miss Arnot was working before she left the house yesterday morning previous to a quarter to eight. Is the time right, Marchant?" asked the detective quickly, and putting his bulk between the man and his master, but doing it so casually that neither noticed the intention.

"Oh, yes, sir," said the man softly.

"Take me, too, by the route which she used to reach the street door," commanded Nick.

Marchant wheeled directly and led the way up the broad staircase of the house. He did not speak until, having passed down the long central hall of the second floor to the rear, he opened the door into a study in which were two desks.

"This is the room, sir," said Marchant simply.

Nick looked around casually. He noted that the windows looked upon the rear yard. No signal could have been passed the girl from the street which would have called her outside to meet a friend. Of course, it was too dark now to see the nature of the prospect behind the house.

"I would like to speak to the housemaid who saw Miss Arnot leave the premises and step into the automobile," said Nick to the butler.

The man bowed and left the room. Arnot had remained downstairs. Nick was enabled to give the apartment a swift, but careful, scrutiny while he was alone.

He had instantly recognized by its distinctly feminine desk furnishings which table had been used by the missing girl. He picked up and handled almost everything on the desk within the first few seconds. He scrutinized the blotter, which, in its leather case, occupied the space directly in front of the chair in which the girl had sat at work.

He tried the drawers of the table. None of them were locked. There were some loose papers and several opened letters lying in these receptacles. Beside the end of the table was a wastebasket—empty, of course.

The maid came in—a smart-looking girl in a French cap and ribbons and high-heeled shoes; but her snub nose, long lip, and laughing blue eyes, with the band of freckles speckling the creaming skin over her nose, betrayed her origin, if her speech did not. She bobbed a curtsy to the detective.

"I asked to see you because you can help me find Miss Arnot," said Nick directly. "What is your name, please?"

"Ella, sir."

"Then, Ella, you were the last person in this house to see Miss Arnot when she went out yesterday morning?"

"I think I was, sir. The poor young lady saw I'd been crying——"

"What for?" interrupted Nick.

"Why had I been crying, d'ye mane, sir?"

"Yes. Young girls like you do not cry for nothing, do they?"

"I don't know, sir. If they have mistresses like mine——"

She looked around the room carefully and lowered her voice to a whisper. Nick had waved the butler out when the girl was ushered into the study.

"Nobody hears you but myself," he assured the maid. "I want you to be open with me."

"Yes, sir. But this has nothing to do with Miss Sadie's going away, sir. Mrs. Garrity had scolded me because I had not finished me dusting before breakfast, and Miss Sadie saw me red eyes when she came down the stairs, and she patted me on the shoulder like the foine little lady she was, and says for me not to mind; ut'll be all the same in a hunder' years. 'Twas a favo-rite expression of hers, ye see. An'——"

"You speak in the past tense of Miss Arnot," interrupted Nick quietly. "Why do you do so?"

"Eh, sir?" asked Ella, showing a puzzled face.

"Do you mean to intimate that you think something serious has happened to the young lady?"

"Sure, ain't it sayrious enough for her to walk out of the house like that an' niver to come back again?" cried the maid.

"She has not been gone long."

"Long enough! Sure, ain't we radin' in the papers ivery day of the dreadful things that happen to gur-rls that do be innercent? And Miss Sadie was a sweet, pretty gur-rl, and as good as she was pretty."

"You do not believe, then, that she would run away to be married?" asked Nick.

"Glory be! What for should she run away?" cried the maid. "Who was to stop her? She was her own mistress, sure."

"And you do not think an elopement possible, then?"

"'Tis not for me to say what was in the young leddy's head. But I've waited on her goin' on five months now. She niver had a man's fortygraft around—saving that one she wears of her brother."

Nick pricked up his ears at this. "Do you mean to say she has a brother?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know, sir. But she told me the picture was one of her brother."

"Older than Miss Arnot?"

"No, sir."

"Ah! a younger brother, then?"

"No, sir," repeated the maid emphatically.

"What's this you say?" queried the detective, slightly puzzled. "Neither younger nor older? Then he is——"

"Her twin, sir. So she told me. Ah, but he's the handsome young man!"

"According to his picture?"

"Sure, sir, that's all I iver saw of him."

"Look like his sister?"

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, he's the spittin' image of her!"

"And you do not know whether he is in New York or not?"

"I don't belave he is."

"On what do you base that belief?"

"Because he's not been here to see her, and they're very fond of wan another."

"I suppose Miss Arnot told you that?"

"She often spoke of him to me, sir. But he seems to be away—out of the country, perhaps."

"I see. Well, to return to our mutton, you never suspected her of being interested in any man other than her brother?"

"Saving Mr. Arnot, sir."

"Oh! her employer?"

"The master—yes, sir."

"What do you mean by saying she was interested in him?"

"She asked me many questions about him. You see, I have worked here ever since Mr. Arnot took the house. Miss Sadie was always curious about his movements. She watched over him as though she were his sister, sir. And I think the master is very fond of her."

"Ah! well, these things are purely speculative, Ella. Let us get back to the happenings of yesterday morning."

"Yes, sir."

"You saw her go out of the house, then?"

"She spoke kind to me, as I say. Then she picked up the veil she had worn in the car the night before. It hung from the hall tree. She wound this about her head, as though she was just going to the corner, maybe; then she sprung back the door latch and fastened it so that the door would not lock while she was out."

"She said nothing to you as she did these things?"

"No, sir. After patting my shoulder and saying what I told you, she did not open her lips again."

"And then she went out?"

"Yes, sir."

"You went to the door and watched her?"

"Not at once, sir. But I was working down the side of the hall. When I reached the door I opened it halfway and stepped out into the vestibule. Then I looked outside."

"And you saw her?"

"She had just reached that automobile, sir."

"Yes?"

"She was walking slowly along the sidewalk. When she was passing the car, she suddenly turned and faced it, and then stepped to the door of it."

"Ah! somebody called her from the interior of the car as she went by?"

"It might be, sir. At any rate, she was going right on about her business, whatever that was, until that moment."

"And did not expect to be spoken to by anybody in the car?"

"Well, she didn't seem to expect to meet anybody she knew right there," said Ella. "Oh, she was going right along about her business, sir."

"Well, then?"

"She talked a bit with whoever was in the car——"

"You did not see who that person was?"

"Oh, no, sir! The curtains were down in the back of the car."

"Go on."

"There is not much more to tell, sir. She stepped into the car; whoever was in it opened the door and held out a hand for her to take——"

"Man or woman?"

"I saw a coat sleeve, and the hand was bare, sir. I am quite positive it was a gentleman helped her in."

"And what next?"

"Why, the car started right off. I was still looking after it when Mr. Marchant came downstairs and said Mr. Arnot was asking for Miss Sadie. I told him what had happened. The car had turned the corner then."

"You did not notice its license number, of course?"

"I never thought anything about it, sir."

"And Marchant did not see it?"

"He couldn't, sir."

Nick was silent for several minutes, turning these facts over in his mind. He saw where Arnot had overlooked another point in introducing him to the case. Was it intentional or unintentional, that overlook?

Philip Arnot had said nothing about Sadie's twin brother.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT THE BUTLER COULD ADD.

The maid waited for further questions, and Nick had one ready in a moment:

"I am much obliged to you, Ella; but perhaps you can give me another bit of information. After it was discovered that the young lady did not return, who cleared up this study?"

"Why—I dusted and picked up the litter this morning, sir."

"You had already dusted it yesterday before Miss Arnot went out?"

"Before anybody was up in the house, sir; the hours are long here because the family gets up so early themselves," said the maid. "Thank Heaven, there is no evening work for me."

"Are you sure the room was not cleared up this morning?"

"After I ridded it yesterday, sir?" queried Ella.

"That is what I mean."

"I might ask, sir. Mrs. Garrity would know."

"We will let Mrs. Garrity tell her own story, Ella," said Nick. "As long as you do not know, never mind. How did you find the desk here where I am sitting, this morning?"

"Miss Sadie's desk, sir?"

"This is it."

"There were no papers on it. She always cleared it off and put things in the drawers herself."

"But she did not do that yesterday morning before she went out?"

"I do not know, sir. I did not come in here then."

"I see. And how about the wastebasket this morning? There were papers in it, of course?"

"No, sir."

"It had not been used, then, yesterday?"

"I don't know, sir. There is usually some rubbish to take down to the dust cans. But there was nothing in the basket this morning."

"Then the supposition is that somebody cleared up the little Miss Sadie must have left yesterday, and even emptied the basket?"

"I could not say, sir," said the maid, shaking her head doubtfully.

Nick looked around the room again. There was an ornate grate for wood, with an ash pan under it, in the fireplace. Both were perfectly clean."

"You found nothing in the pan yonder, I suppose?"

"Nothing but cigar ashes and such," replied the maid.

"Cigar ashes?"

"Mr. Arnot smokes a good deal in here when he is at home. He often empties the trays he uses in the pan—or Mr. Marchant does it for him."

"Nothing but the remains of burned tobacco in the pan, then, this morning?" queried the detective, eying her keenly.

"Not that I noticed, sir."

"Very well, Ella. You have been very kind to tell me all you have. And perhaps you have aided me considerably. I thank you heartily. Will you send the butler to me as you go out?"

"Yes, sir," said the maid, smiling on him, and, making a curtsy, she departed.

Nick looked around the room again and shook his head.

"Why the care to pick up all the scraps and even to empty the wastebasket?" he muttered.

The door opened and the quiet, soft-stepping butler appeared. He was a clerical-looking man, pale of face and not portly; but his gray eyes looked honestly into the detective's own. He seemed to be perfectly trustworthy.

"I have only one or two questions to ask you, Marchant," said Nick pleasantly. "Of course, you have no reason to believe that you know who Miss Arnot went away with?"

"As far as I know, sir, from my own observation, she went away alone," said the butler.

"That is, you did not see her after she passed out of the door?

"That is so, sir."

"You know what the maid tells, Marchant?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"You have no reason to believe Ella untrustworthy?"

"I believe she is perfectly honest, sir. And she tells the story twice alike, sir," was the reply.

"But personally you did not see Miss Arnot after she went out of the front door?"

"To be exact, sir, not after she started down the stairs yonder, sir."

"That main stairway of the house, up which you led me?"

"Yes, sir."

"I take it you were up here, then?"

"I was coming down from the chambers, sir. I act as Mr. Arnot's valet in everything but the matter of shaving," explained the butler. "There is a man comes in to perform that duty. I set out the things for him, and I left him yesterday morning at work on Mr. Arnot when I came out of his dressing room. I was coming down the stairs, as I said, sir, when the door of this room opened and Miss Arnot came out."

"Hurriedly?"

"Why—er—yes, sir! I should say as though she were excited a bit. She was a very self-contained young lady usually, sir."

"So you noted that her manner was different from common?"

"Somewhat flurried, sir, I should say."

"Very well; go on, please."

"She walked quickly along the hall to the head of the stairway. I could see her all the time, you understand, sir, for I was descending the stairs."

"Yes. Could she see you?"

"She might have done so had she raised her eyes; but I believe she did not hear or see me. The stair runner is very heavy, sir."

"So I perceive."

"And she hurried down the main staircase as soon as she came to it."

"Her eyes were lowered all the time, then?" queried Nick. "Was that natural?"

"Why, sir, I believe she had a letter in her hand."

Nick sat up in his chair and looked keenly at the butler.

"A letter?" he repeated. "Are you sure it was a letter?"

"I believe so. Some paper that she was interested in. That is why she did not see me coming down the other stairs, I presume."

"Humph! a letter that she had just found in the morning's mail, perhaps?"

"It might be, sir. I did not notice it when I brought up the mail during the family's breakfast hour."

"What do you mean?" demanded Nick. "You know something about this letter?"

"Why, I believe, now that I consider it, that it was a personal letter to her. There may have been such in the mail. I did not sort it at all, but put it all on her table here. Miss Sadie always looked over the mail herself."

"I understand that. But why do you say you think it was a personal letter to the missing young woman?"

"As she hurried along to the head of the stairs she dropped something out of her hand. It was a paper, and it fluttered behind her and she did not notice it. I quickened my step, sir, and reached the foot of the stairs and secured the paper as it blew toward me over the carpet. Miss Sadie was then halfway down the other flight, and before I called to her, or followed her further, I looked to see if the paper I had picked up was of any value."

"And what was it?" asked the detective.

"It was a torn and empty envelope, and it was addressed in typewritten characters to Miss Arnot."

"Then the presumption was that she had been reading its contents as she hurried downstairs?"

"Yes, sir. That was what I gathered."

"But the maid, Ella, has not mentioned the letter," said Nick suddenly.

"I do not think Ella saw it, sir."

"But Miss Arnot still held the letter when she went down into the lower hall?"

"Ella was at the foot of the stairs with her back to Miss Sadie, sir. I saw her myself. And Miss Sadie had tucked the letter—or whatever it was she was reading—into the front of her dress before she reached Ella."

"I see," said Nick thoughtfully. Then he asked, turning another keen look on the man:

"Did you give Mr. Arnot all these particulars?"

"I—I do not think I did, sir," admitted the butler, with some hesitation.

"Why not?"

"I do not know, sir, saving that the matter escaped my mind in the first excitement of Miss Sadie not coming back. Mr. Arnot was very angry, and he asked us all what we knew about it, and he was rather browbeating to the under servants, sir, and Mrs. Garrity and I had some difficulty in soothing the cook and the others.

"Later, when I had time to think the whole matter over, I remembered these points I now bring to your attention. I—I hope you will not think that I deliberately hid the information from Mr. Arnot, sir."

"I accuse you of nothing but the crime of being a very careful and painstaking servant, Marchant," said Nick Carter, smiling. "Now, have you gone far enough in the refreshment of your memory to remember what you did with that envelope?"

"I tossed it into the wastebasket, sir."

"This one?" queried Nick, pointing to the empty one at the end of the table.

"No, sir. The one in the servants' sitting room in the basement. I went down the rear stairway from this floor—the stairway by which the servants reach their sleeping rooms. I remember of tossing the envelope, that I had rolled up like a ball, into the basket."

"A plain envelope, Marchant?"

"No, sir. A business envelope."

"With a name and address printed in the corner?" cried Nick, eagerly bending forward.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you read the name, Marchant?"

"I did not, sir. But I remember there was some printing there."

"Could you find that envelope?"

"Why, the basket was emptied into the paper bin down in the rear area. I—I might find it. I think I should know the envelope again. Besides, it cannot be very far down."

Nick arose quickly. "This is all you have to tell me, Marchant?"

"I do not know of anything else, sir, in connection with the absence of Miss Sadie."

"Who cleared up her table, and the room, after her departure?"

"I do not know that the room was dusted until this morning. Then Ella would have done it in the course of her regular duties, sir."

"But the table?"

"Mr. Arnot had to attend to his own mail yesterday morning, of course, sir. He did so when it became apparent that Miss Sadie was not coming back. He probably removed the letters and took them downtown with him."

"Yes? And the basket? Who emptied it?"

"I do not know—if it needed emptying. I did not come into the room after Mr. Arnot went downtown at twelve o'clock. When he came back at four he shut himself up in here and worked for some time. When the dressing bell rang before dinner I came in to set things right, and found that he had cleared up any muss he may have made at his own desk, and had even emptied his cigar tray."

"In the ash pan under the grate?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the basket?"

"Was empty. I noticed that. There was not a scrap of paper around. I opened the windows to clear the atmosphere."

"He had been smoking? More than usual, perhaps?"

"Mr. Arnot is a great smoker. And he was disturbed, I believe, and so smoked faster than usual."

"In other words," said Nick easily, and apparently not looking at the man, "there was more smoke in the room and more ash than usual in the pan under the grate?"

"Why—Mr. Arnot was here all the afternoon. Yes, I suppose he smoked a good deal."

"You did not, of course, count the stubs of cigars left after his debauch?" and Nick laughed outright at the puzzled face of the butler.

"I do not understand your meaning, sir. I do know how many cigars Mr. Arnot smoked during the time he was here yesterday afternoon. I always fill his case for him. He expects to find a full case whenever he goes out. I even buy his cigars. They are made for him by the thousand lots, but are delivered as I may direct, and by the hundred.

"I counted the butts to see if I should have to refill his case after dinner. He smokes one cigar going downtown to business, another after lunch, which is served him in his office, and another coming home. He may give one or two away in the course of the day. He carries a case of twelve cigars, sir—made especially for him and fitting into a special pocket made by his tailor on the inside of his coat under the left arm. Now, I noted that he had left four ends of cigars in the ash pan," said Marchant with some pride, for he felt that he was an observant and methodical man.

"Good! And did you ever think, Marchant, how much ash comes from the burning of a cigar?" asked Nick quietly.

"I do not know that I have particularly noticed, sir."

"Your master smokes a diplomatico size, does he not?"

"Yes, sir. A very strong cigar, and he smokes it to his mustache."

"And you have never particularly noticed the ash from one cigar of that size?" asked Nick.

"I never have, sir."

"Tell me, then, how much ash did you find in the pan under the grate yonder? You counted the butts, so you must have got down close enough to see the ashes."

"That is quite true, sir. The ash is very feathery, of course, sir, and it was spread out a good deal. But scraped together in a heap—I should say—it might have filled—well—say a cup twice full, sir!" finished the butler, evidently laboring slightly beyond his depth now.

"An ordinary teacup twice full?"

"Fully that, sir."

"And that was the ash from four cigars? Do you know, Marchant, that it has been my observation that the ash from four such cigars as your master smokes would barely fill a whisky glass?"

"Eh, sir?"

"I am afraid that you are not altogether as observant as you might be, Marchant. But you mean well, I have no doubt," said Nick, smiling on the butler again. "Now, Marchant, see if you can go downstairs and find that envelope that you picked up and cast away. We will see if you can be successful in that errand. And, Marchant!"

"Yes, sir?" queried the butler, slightly chagrined.

"It would be just as well if you said nothing to anybody—to nobody at all, understand!—as to what has just passed between us. If you are asked, say that I have forbidden you to speak."

"But if Mr. Arnot asks me?" gasped the butler.

"Say exactly those words to him: 'Mr. Carter has forbidden me to speak.' That will satisfy Mr. Arnot. He will come to me if he wishes to know."

"Very well, sir."

The butler withdrew. Nick shook his head slowly, and lit his own cigar in a deep reverie. Finally he pulled open one of the drawers in the table again.

"I am sorry to have to investigate the private correspondence of the young lady," he muttered. "But even at that, I fancy somebody has been over it all before me, and that I shall find nothing important enough to burn!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE NUMBER OF THE CAR.

Nick Carter ran through the papers in the drawer swiftly but keenly. It was not that he expected to find anything of importance; but it would never do to neglect a detail that might offer an important clue.

There was an appointment with a dressmaker, an invitation or two from people who had included the missing girl's employer in their catalogue of friends, a bill from a dentist, a playbill or two, some business letters addressed to Mr. Arnot, a shopping list which showed that the girl evidently had Mr. Arnot's credit to buy on if she wished, and a few newspaper clippings.

These clippings, oddly enough, interested Nick more than anything else in the drawer. They did not refer to Mr. Arnot, or to his business, as far as he could see; nor were they news items that would naturally interest any girl. And there seemed to be two distinct sets of clippings—referring to two several happenings, occurrences which were not only a long ways apart in space, but in time as well.

First Nick picked up a yellow slip of some newspaper—he thought it was cut out of the *Herald*—dated back in the time when the boys fresh from the Cuban campaign of the Spanish war had arrived in the Philippines to subdue the tribes that were being dragged into the bosom of Uncle Sam's family—whether they would or no—by the scuff of their necks.

There was the account of the landing of a certain transport full of the boys in khaki, followed by the report of a skirmish in which the names of several men were mentioned for gallant service.

The next clipping referred to another "battle" later in the campaign. No names but that of the colonel in command were mentioned. Another very brief item reported the cutting off of a sergeant and file of men and the statement that, although the bodies of the troopers were not found, it was expected that they had been killed and their bodies sunken in the swamps.

There were other items referring to happenings about this time in the far-distant Pacific islands. But some of the slips were cut out of very recent papers, and all of these referred to a Philippine show then exhibiting at Coney Island!

The interest of Miss Arnot in "Captain Jack McCormick's Philippine Village"—if, indeed, these clippings were hers—suggested to Nick that there might be a side of the young woman's character that Phil Arnot had not fathomed in the five months the girl had been with him.

Did the millionaire really know his distant relative well at all? Was he hiding matters that would aid in the clearing up of the mystery of her disappearance, or was he actually ignorant himself of the young woman's real character, and ignorant, too, of her private interests?

However, Nick put the clippings into his own pocket for further examination, and then, as Marchant had not returned, he arose from his seat and went out into the hall. He smelled cigar smoke, and, going down the main flight, found Mr. Philip Arnot idly knocking the balls about a billiard table in a room off the rear hall on the first floor.

"What have you discovered?" demanded the millionaire promoter, throwing his cue in the rack and coming quickly toward the detective.

"That you have very intelligent and well-trained servants indeed, Mr. Arnot," replied Nick quietly.

"Oh, piffle!" ejaculated Arnot. "Still mysterious?"

"That is part of the game," returned Nick, shrugging his shoulders. "As long as the problem remains a mystery, we must be mysterious, too. By the way, you said the car which the girl saw Miss Sadie get into stood at about three hundred and twenty-two or three hundred and twenty-four."

"That's what I gathered from the maid's explanation yesterday morning."

"Thanks. I will be back shortly. Marchant is to report a small matter to me in that study upstairs. Tell him to wait there if he comes looking for me."

Nick seized his hat as he went through the hall and stepped out upon the street. It was not yet nine o'clock, and the quiet hum of the residence district made the street seem lively, although there were few pedestrians or vehicles in sight.

There was laughter and music from one house, a party were sitting on the steps of another enjoying the cooling breeze from the water, at a third point a group had gathered at the curb talking with people in an automobile.

There were few children in sight, but plenty of young people—the girls in bright dresses and without hats, the young men in nice summer clothes and straw chapeaus.

Nick walked slowly along the street until he read "322" painted upon the fanlight of a door at the top of a high stoop. There was nobody on the steps; but in the area, sitting on the steps leading to the basement door, were two maids. Nick took off his hat and spoke to them:

"I beg your pardon, but will you kindly answer a question or two about an automobile that stood in front of the house here yesterday morning just before eight o'clock?"

The two women did not answer him at first, but stared, and the younger one giggled. The other—evidently the cook—recognized the fact that Nick was not an idle questioner, or a man who was trying to become friendly. She said:

"Be still wid youse, Mayme. Can't yez tell the gintleman? You was doin' your stoop at about that time."

"There's lots of automobiles stop here," said the maid, with a toss of her head. "Sure the master and mistress are out in theirs now."

"This was not their machine, I feel sure," said Nick quietly.

"I'd have noticed if one was standing here. I'd axed them what they wanted so early," said the housemaid.

"Perhaps it stood near here," returned Nick, unshaken in his insistence. "And as you say, you must have noticed it if it was at that hour. People do not start out motoring so early, as a usual thing."

"That's right, sor," said the cook. "Think if you can't help the gintleman, Mayme."

"What kind of a looking one was it?" asked the housemaid rather sullenly.

"It was inclosed in back and was a large car. There was probably only the chauffeur on the front seat, and likely a single gentleman inside the inclosed part. It was facing west."

"Oh! you mane the wan in front of Bobbinses' door?" cried the girl suddenly. "That's twenty-six."

"Number three hundred and twenty-six, you say?"

"Yes, sir. I remimber there was one there—a fine, big machine, all painted red and black. The curtains were down behind the back windows, and I didn't see into the car."

"I think it is the one I mean."

"Did you see anybody get into it?"

"Not while I was out here, sir."

"And did it leave here while you were on the steps?"

"I don't remimber that it did," said the girl, gradually becoming more communicative. "It was here when I came out to sweep, and when I went in I believe it still stood in front of Bobbinses'."

The girl began to giggle again. Nick ventured another and most important question.

"Did you notice the license number on the back of the car?"

The girl's giggles increased, and she turned away her head and said something in a whisper to the cook.

"Behave, ye ridiculous crathur!" returned the older woman. "What's it got ter do with yer new dress? Sure, ye have that dress on the brain, so ye have!"

"If you don't mind telling me——" suggested Nick softly.

"Spake up and say it! Do yez know the number?" demanded the cook, shaking her companion by the shoulder.

"I couldn't forgit it!" giggled the maid. "Hadn't ye been measuring me the night before for to sind away for that Princiss dress we saw advertised in the paper? Sure, I have the numbers in me hid."

"And ye've not much ilse there!" declared the cook, with disgust. "What d'ye mane? The gintlemin will think ye're makin' fun av him. What's the number ye seen on the ortermobile?"

The giggling maid whispered again in her friend's ear, and then tucked a roll of her apron in her mouth to stifle an explosion of laughter.

"What does she mean?" asked Nick patiently, knowing that he might get something in time if he waited long enough.

"The silly thing!" exclaimed the cook. "She won't till you herself, but it's mighty proud of her figger she is. The ortermobile, she says, had the misuremint of her waist and bust line on it—be still yer gigglin', Mayme! Ye fool!"

"Then I suppose I can guess," said Nick, with a faint chuckle. "I suppose the dimensions of the Venus de Milo would just about hit off your friend's measurements?"

"I niver heard tell of the lady," said the cook, with

a fat laugh. "And the Vaynus statue the mistress has on the dinky little stand in her boudoir ain't got no Princess gownd on it, *that's* sure!"

At this the housemaid squealed with outraged modesty, and covered her ears with her hands. The cook laughed again, and added:

"If it's the correct infermation yer afther, sir, I can give it you. She's thirty-two waist and thirty-eight bust. Can ye make anything out of that?"

"And a very fine figure, indeed," declared the detective gravely. "I presume your friend wouldn't mind which measurement came first in the automobile number?"

"Waist!" gasped Mayme, who evidently had not shut out all sound.

"Then the license was 'thirty-two-thirty-eight,' was it?"

She nodded violently.

"New York, or New Jersey?"

At that the girl stopped giggling and looked at him. "I didn't mind the letters," she said.

"And those were all the numbers?"

"All I minded," was again the reply.

"Thank you," said the detective, lifting his hat again. "You have been very kind. I am going to send some ice cream over to you from the confectioner around the corner, if you will be so kind as to accept it—with my good wishes."

"It's you are the nice man," said the cook easily. "I wouldn't care if me own measurements had been on the car. I'd have given 'em to yez without so much blarneyin'!"

Nick kept his promise regarding the refreshments before doing anything else toward trying to identify the car. Meantime, he was turning over the fact he had elicited from the housemaid in his mind.

"Thirty-two-thirty-eight is not a high number for either a New York or a New Jersey license, and that's a fact!" he muttered, as he walked back from the avenue in the wake of the confectioner's boy with the ice cream. "I reckon the girl got the figures right as far as she went; but in all probability there was a number after thirty-two-thirty-eight. Question: What number?

"With those four figures to depend on, however, it would be only a matter of time to discover who owns the machine that carried Miss Sadie Arnot away—providing this one the Mayme girl saw is the one in question. She evidently went into the house before Miss Arnot came along, or she would have noticed her speaking with the person in the car.

"Humph! Now, if there was *one* housemaid out on her stoop at that hour, there must have been others. This car was in front of three hundred and twenty-six—and the family occupying that house is named Bobbins. Let's see what we can wind off the 'Bobbinses,' as our friend Mayme calls them."

CHAPTER VII.

RAPHAEL, THE MISERABLE.

Nick halted in front of No. 326. There was nobody on the steps of the house nor in the areaway. But there were lights in several windows, showing that the family was probably at home.

This was quite as nice a house as the Arnot establishment. Across the street lived a physician, and for the purpose of being the more easily found he had caused to be placed in front of his house a handsome and brilliant gaslight. The regular street light was not far away, and on this side of the thoroughfare where Nick stood. Therefore, the vicinity was brilliantly lighted.

After a little hesitation the detective mounted the stoop and touched the bell. Almost instantly—as though he had been waiting behind the door for that very purpose—a solemn-faced footman opened the portal and looked questioningly at the caller.

"May I see Mr. Bobbins?" asked Nick.

"He is hout, sir," was the announcement.

"Mrs. Bobbins, then?"

"There his none, sir," responded the footman, with some emphasis.

Nick opened his lips to begin his inquiries of this fellow, when the man spoke again:

"Would you like to see Mr. Raphael, sir?"

"Perhaps I would," returned Nick slowly. "Do you think——"

"Mr. Raphael will see you, sir, in his apartment which he never leaves. Right this way, if you please."

"Mr. Raphael, whoever he is, cannot possibly be the person I want to see," muttered the detective, as he stepped into the house. "A bedridden unfortunate is not likely to be of much assistance in this case."

But the door was already closed, and the tall young footman was leading the way to a door on the left. He opened it softly, and even while Nick was getting out his card the man announced:

"The gentleman from the street, sir."

"Let him come in! Come in!" cried a voice.

It was an eager, resonant voice—clear, silvery, bell-like, yet with a pathetic note, as though its owner might have been in pain. Nick entered the room expecting to see a man in a bed, or, at least, in a wheel chair. But what smote him first of all, as he came in, was the beauty of the room.

The lighting was exquisite, and from opaque globes in the ceiling, so that there was not a shadow anywhere saving under the few and costly pieces of furniture. This furniture, when upholstered, was done in Eastern goods as fine and as valuable as the court dress of a mandarin of the ruby button.

The wood itself was carved with exquisite taste. There was not a jarring note in either the upholstery, the color scheme of the decorations, or in the paper on the walls.

In his first quick glance about the room, Nick appraised the value of several pictures as mounting to-

ward the hundred-thousand mark! There were not many ornaments, but those in evidence would have graced a palace.

A huge marble mantel, plainly the loot of some Italian castle, filled one end of the room—that end farthest from the street. And instead of crowding the apartment, it seemed to give length and dignity to the whole place.

Oddly enough, in one place—an alcove before which was draped the finest of damask hangings—was a brass bed no larger than a child's crib, with snowy linen on the pillow and a pale-blue silken coverlid.

These points the detective took in while he was walking the few steps necessary to bring him nearly to the centre of the room. There stood a heavy writing table of real ebony, with a dull satiny finish to it, which showed its extreme age.

On the table were several books and some scientific instruments. There was, too, desk furnishings of heavy, ancient-looking copper, and a blotting mat. The chair behind the table was of the same wood, and would have been large for a large man. The person who had spoken filled it well.

His head was large, the forehead of noble proportions, the yellow hair—as yellow as cornsilk—brushed back from it in waves that caught the light from above and made it look as though the hair were continually stirred by a breeze.

But that hair was no more wonderful than the man's beard. This was of exactly the same shade, and it swept far down his breast. He wore a loose dressing, or smoking, jacket, but it was a fact that beneath it there was every evidence of a fine torso—broad shoulders, deep chest, magnificent throat under the beard, and the arms were developed like a gymnast's.

He filled, as Nick observed, the chair, leaning one arm upon the writing pad, that hand holding a pen, while in the other hand he held the mouthpiece of a valuable water pipe that might have graced the private apartments of the Shah of Persia!

This benign-looking man's nose was shaped like a hawk's beak, and on either side of the large, but not unhandsome, organ was set an eye of hazel that held the light of ever-changing emotion in its depth. His lips were full and his cheeks owned a healthful color, despite the information Nick had received that Mr. Raphael never left his apartment.

He was upward of forty years—perhaps older. And when he stood up the detective was confident that he would measure at least six feet tall.

He did not stand up, however. He smiled at Nick as the detective approached, and there was something mischievous in that smile, like a roguish child's. He held up a perfectly manicured hand, on which—and this was odd, and the only effeminate thing about him—were many rings, and waved aside Nick's proffered card.

"Wait," he said, in his resonant, curiously clear voice. "Your card may tell me too much. It is my fancy to *guess* who you are and what you want."

Nick was dumb with surprise. The strange gentleman continued, after a moment:

"You have made some inquiries in this street. This is an odd hour to ask for friends in a block of such houses as there are here. And you go about it strangely. You halted at three hundred and twenty-two and buzzed the servants there. Oh! I did not see the servants—only you, sir. But as you halted at the area step I know it was the people below stairs with whom you spoke.

"Again, you are not the sort of a man to go about making such promiscuous acquaintances for any other reason than to gain information. Ah! you see I am observant.

"Wait! You walk along the street toward the avenue to the west of us; in a few minutes you are back again. You are evidently not satisfied with the information gained. You hesitate; you consider; you look up at this house, and there passes through your mind the query: 'Will I gain what I have come for here?'

"Ah! I am right, eh? You wish information of some kind. You have come here for it? And who knows but you may have come to the right shop, for it is little that goes on that I do not know." And the strange man ended by laughing like a chime of silver bells.

Nick was frankly puzzled. His first suspicion was that he had run up against an amateur clarvoyant, or fakir of that order. The richness of the furnishings and the respectability of the house seemed to deny that, however.

"I can see you are puzzled," continued the man, when he looked up at Nick again. "But, listen! That is only what you have done within the past few minutes. Now, for *why* you did it and *who* you are.

"I am a seer—Raphael, the Seer. You have not heard of me, because I do not advertise in the Sunday papers. Nevertheless, I am as great as any of them."

Again he laughed. Nick began to believe that he had been ushered into the apartment of a wealthy and harmless insane man.

"Now, as to why you make these inquiries?" pursued the strange individual, never offering to rise from his chair nor inviting Nick to take one. "And that why will reveal the what, too. You are making search for somebody. It is not a mere matter of asking for a name or a number. You are willing to spend some time in the search.

"You stand buzzing servants; had the servants here been on the stoop you would have talked with them. But no fear! Our people do not sit out on the area steps and speak to gentlemen going by. They know better. *They know too well I would see them!*"

He laughed again cunningly. It seemed childish,

and yet Nick was interested. He waited, however, for the man to "run down" before he offered any word of his own.

"So, being of gentlemanly appearance—and an intelligent man, as I can see clearly now that you are actually before me—and being patient and careful in your search, I will make my guess regarding the why and the what of it.

"You are paid to search for somebody, and your mission is secretive. Therefore, you are a detective; and as you have come to this house to ask for information, you would better ask me—Raphael, the Seer—for I am more than likely to know."

Finally Nick was allowed to get in a word, and he said:

"Without denying or affirming the truth of your wonderful guesses, Sir Seer, I challenge your final statement. You are not likely to be able to tell me what I want to know. But your servants may."

"Why not? What my servants know *I* know. Ask them; they will all agree in sustaining my claim of omniscience."

"Perhaps. But for a very simple reason you could not give me the information I want," said Nick.

"Why, sir?"

"Because you would not be out of your bed at the hour the incident occurred, in all probability." And the detective chuckled.

"Indeed! Do you not know that I *never* sleep? Why, all the people in the house know that. They never caught me in bed yet. A man of brain, sir, and of the powers *I* possess, does not need to sleep!"

Nick smiled rather doubtfully. He wondered if the man ever became really dangerous. Perhaps he would best not to cross him, for he looked like a powerful fellow—a hard man to handle in a set-to.

"Of course," said the strange person airily, waving one of his white hands toward the little bed in the alcove, "I let them see my bed. It is merely there for ornament. Nobody ever saw me in it, let me tell you!"

He said this eagerly—somewhat angrily, in fact. Nick laughed lightly, and replied, quite at his ease again:

"Surely they wouldn't suspect you of fitting that bedstead?"

The strange man uttered a cry—a shrill, pathetic wail of pain. It came so suddenly that Nick started forward, coming around the end of the table. His host had flung himself back in the chair and his eyes were closed. He said, in a soft, but shaken, voice:

"Then you do not know? You do not know? Ah! then there is another in this world that has not heard of Raphael—Raphael, the Miserable. I am he."

Nick looked down. What he saw—rather, what he failed to see—brought a cry of amazement to the detective's lips.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CAMERA OBSCURA.

The man's torso filled the chair completely. But beneath it and beneath the table Nick looked in vain for lower limbs!

"Raphael, the Miserable," as the strange being called himself, was a legless man. The upper portion of his body promised a perfect human being. Nature in making him had played a sorry joke on his parents, a tragic drama on himself.

He filled the chair, as has been said, but he did not sit upon it. He stood on the chair bottom, for he possessed two strong, well-developed, and rather large feet.

These were attached to his body by short, strong ankles. There were no legs. Nature had made two ends of a large and vigorous man, and had clapped them together without the formality of giving this strange and unfortunate being the legs which should have been his.

The ankles and feet were covered with a sort of shoe of black satin, halfway down the arch; but the toes, which were long and almost as pliable as a simian's, were bare, were cared for as nicely as the man's hands, but possessed on their backs, or tops, a long growth of silky, yellow hair, similar to that which covered his head and face.

Nick saw these long, strong toes grip the edge of the chair, and actually raise their owner into an upright position again. He was, indeed, four-handed—quadrumanous. His toes were left bare as a help and an assistance to him in moving about.

Before the strange man opened his eyes again, Nick had stepped back so that he could no longer see the deformity, and perhaps Raphael appreciated his delicacy. At least, he looked very patiently at the detective, and said, in a soft tone:

"Forgive my emotion. It is a positive physical pain to me to know that one more person must discover my affliction. Let us not discuss it. I never leave this room, but I am cursed by insatiate curiosity. That is why I brought this present punishment on myself.

"I saw you on the street; I suspected your motives; I watched your movements. Now, I want to know what you are after. You must tell me. I know that I have guessed your employment correctly.

"And do not be too sure that I was not out of my bed and stirring about at any hour you might name. I do not sleep. Why should a man like me sleep? I have the vigor—of both mind and body—of two men. I must keep about to use that vigor up.

"Come, now; let me hear what your trouble is," urged the strange man, looking less childish and more grave.

Nick Carter had seldom been more disturbed and surprised. He could only in kindness accede to the strange man's request.

Not that he believed that the man could help him

in his quest. Nor did he see how Raphael could have seen out into the street just now and noted his movements.

Unodubtedly the man had a servant—a confidential attendant—who reported to him when he wished all that could be seen from the windows. It was the man's fancy to make believe he possessed some power beyond that of the ordinary man.

"The time to which I refer," said the detective, smiling, "was just about a quarter to eight yesterday morning."

"Ha! Seven-forty-five, yesterday," said Raphael, tapping his white forehead with his long index finger. "Let me find the right pigeonhole in my memory cabinet for that time. What was I about then? Not at my gymnastic exercises. They begin at six and last for an hour. Believe me, it is an art, Mr. Detective, for a man to live twenty-five years in one room and keep in healthy condition as I do. Exercise—vigorous exercise is necessary."

He pointed to two parallel bars of polished rosewood running from end to end of the room at one side, and near the ceiling and about eighteen inches apart.

"I travel on those bars more rapidly than you can on your feet, sir," said Raphael, the legless man, proudly. "It is like flying. Every cripple, I believe, dreams of flying. It is the great desire of their souls to move quickly, for the very reason that they get about so slowly.

"To travel through space! When aviation is perfected, I shall travel abroad myself. A man will need no legs in the coming age of air flights. To shoot through space! Ah! that is my dream.

"And on those bars I can fly so rapidly from end to end of this apartment that one might think I had wings. See me now!"

He had worked himself into a state of strange excitement while he talked. His hair seemed to wave as though the wind blew over it; his cheeks burned redly; his hazel eyes grew gold with the light in them.

He had forgotten the matter under discussion with the detective. Seizing a heavy silken cord, which had lashed to it at one end two silver balls, he whirled these about his head and cast them upward, where the balls and a length of the cord wound about one of the rosewood bars.

Instantly the strange man seized the taut cord and, hand over hand, mounted up the rope, his legless body swinging from his powerful arms. He clung to the bar with one hand while he unwound and cast off the cord by which he had mounted.

All this had taken but a few seconds. Now, with a shrill laugh, he began to propel himself along the rods, hanging from them by his hands, as a gymnast does on the parallel bars. Only he moved much more swiftly than any athlete Nick Carter had ever seen before.

From end to end of the room he swung, his weight making the bars bend and creak, his voice ringing out in wild laughter continually. His grip was as sure as a monkey's; he stretched his arms at full length, propelling his flying body faster and faster through the air. At the end wall he turned like a flash and dashed back, and the sensation must have been much like that of a bird on the wing!

"See me! see me! Am I not flying?" he cried, looking down at the detective.

His hair flew straight out behind him; the current of it parted his flowing beard. Some huge bird cutting capers in the air would be no more strange than the appearance of this man as he whirred back and forth on the parallel bars.

Was he mad? Or was it the bottled-up excitement of his nature getting free by these physical means?

Nick realized that here was a very strange problem; but it was retarding him on his quest of the reason and method of Miss Sadie Arnot's disappearance.

"What do you think of me? Say! what do you think of me, Mr. Detective?" cried Raphael, cocking his head on one side and looking down like a bird on a perch.

"I think you would look a deal more dignified, and it would become you more, if you descended and occupied your chair again, sir," returned the detective gravely. "I believe that you wrong yourself when you give way to such bursts of excitement."

"Ah! you think so, do you? Then you think I am mad, too?"

"I think that many a man, by giving way to impulses such as you have, becomes mad."

Raphael reflected, hanging by one hand as easily as though it were the way nature intended man to rest himself!

"Perhaps you are right," said the strange being, at last. "And not a few of our friends declare me to be mad. My poor old father is all that has saved me from being shut up in some private sanitarium. Ha! as though that would be more of a prison than the one I make for myself here. Well, Mr. Detective, you are a thoughtful man, and something of a philosopher, I believe. I think I should like you in time. You are plain-spoken, too. I hope you are not married?"

He asked the question sharply, and his expression changed.

"I am not," said Nick firmly.

"The better for you; the better for you," declared Raphael.

"Shall I help you down?" asked Nick.

"Help? Why, I need no help. No man in the whole world needs help so little as Raphael," declared the man. "I do everything for myself. I might even make my own clothing, if I chose. I can sew. As for getting down from my aërial perch—watch!"

He swung a moment by both hands, lightly throwing his body toward the ceiling. Then, when it was poised to suit him, he let go with his hands and dropped to the floor, landing on his palms on the soft carpet, his elbows slightly bent, and using his arms

just as a man would his legs in dropping from a height.

He landed as lightly as a feather, seemingly, and without jarring or injuring himself in the least. There he set himself upright on his feet, and looked up at Nick with the shrewd, cunning smile of the child who has done something "smart."

"We will now continue our discussion," he said rapidly. "At seven-forty-five yesterday morning I was engaged in an occupation that is beneath one of my intellect, yet is very human indeed. I was minding my neighbors' business!"

Nick looked his astonishment, and could not say a word.

"I tell you I am cursed by an insatiate curiosity. If I possessed the philosopher's stone I would wish away the sides of the houses along this street and I would look in on the families as they live. That would be my occupation all day long.

"The first study of mankind is man; I desire to know how men live; what they do and say; even what they think! But not possessing the philosopher's stone, nevertheless I manage to mind a good deal of my neighbors' business."

"You puzzle me," said Nick frankly.

"Of course I do," said the little man proudly. "I always puzzle people. I have puzzled doctors, lawyers, philosophers, and—myself! I am a living enigma. But so is every other man, only few of them are wise enough to know it."

"Well, I give you up," said Nick good-naturedly. "Suppose you tell me what you were really doing at a quarter to eight yesterday morning. 'Minding your neighbors' business' does not convey a very clear idea to my mind."

"No? I will particularize. I saw the doctor opposite show an early patient out of his door. The man was lame. That same man has been coming there for three months. He has rheumatism—a foolish disease, because the patient can cure it himself by diet and exercise, if he will.

"And this foolish man has likely paid that doctor a mint of money for drugs and advice. The doctor rubbed his hands cheerfully as the man limped down the steps. While the man limps he may indeed rub his hands cheerfully! He feels the fee in his palm—ha, ha!

"Then the baker stopped before the door. In getting out the morning supply of rolls he dropped two in the gutter. He picked them up and dropped them into the bag again.

"Instantly," said this strange creature, "I called the footman, told him of the facts, and instructed him what to do. I sent him to stop the bread man, and to say: 'We wish a double quantity of rolls this morning; bring another bagful.' When the man did so, our footman hands him back the first bag, and says: 'Mr. Raphael's compliments; he does not care for bread that has rolled in the gutter.'

"Do you see?" cried the man, with another of his high, silvery laughs. "My reputation for omniscience is so spread."

"And you see all this from your window?" demanded Nick.

"Not a bit of it! Look at the windows. They are shrouded, and the blinds inside closed all the time—just as they are now. You must guess better than that, Mr. Detective! I saw the girl at twenty-two sweeping her steps and gazing idly up and down the street. I presume you talked with that girl to-night, sir?"

"I did."

"She told you something of what you wanted to know?"

"Yes. She told me a part."

"Ask *me!*" commanded Raphael.

"I will," said Nick. "Did you see an automobile standing in front of your door, or about at this spot, at the hour named yesterday morning?"

"I did," said Raphael promptly.

He lightly hopped upon a low hassock and perched there like a huge owl, looking up at Nick with his head on one side.

"Did you recognize the machine? Did it belong here, or to a neighbor?"

"Never saw it before."

"Did you notice the number?"

"I did not see it. It stood in such a way that I could not see the sign behind. And when it moved away I was not interested enough in it to notice the number," said the strange man carelessly. "Was it only that automobile that you were interested in?"

"And in the people in it."

Raphael shrugged his shoulders. "A chauffeur, a commonplace-looking young man in the limousine, and a lady."

"Ah! then you saw the lady enter the car?" cried Nick.

"No. She was in the car when it arrived. It came along from the east at about quarter past seven, stopped at the curb here, and stood until within a few minutes of eight."

"And the lady was in the car all the time?"

"With the common-looking young man—yes," said Raphael.

"See here! what kind of a looking lady was this?" demanded Nick earnestly.

"You are not married, and you are interested in the ladies, are you? Then you are in danger, Mr. Detective!" cried Raphael, with a roguish look.

"This is a business interest," said Nick grimly. "Will you please answer my question?"

"She was a striking-looking young woman. I do not see, for the life of me, how she could have put up with the presence of that man in the car. He was a fellow of no breeding, with a curled mustache and an effeminate chin. Humph! No accounting for tastes in women, however."

"That may be. But you are not answering my in-

quiry, Mr. Raphael," said the detective. "How did the woman look?"

"She was a lovely girl," said Raphael, with a sigh. "These lovely women always get puppies of men attached to them. Haven't you noticed it?"

"Was she light or dark?" demanded Nick, in desperation.

"Dark. She had beautiful eyes—oh, beautiful gray eyes. A lovely complexion. Such a form! well, the statues of the unfortunate Greeks are nothing compared to a well-bred and well-groomed lady of our day and age. Don't you think I am right, sir?"

"A matter of taste," returned Nick. "But about this particular lady. How was she dressed?"

He managed, after a time, to get out of the strange man a pretty complete description of the woman and the man in the car. He knew then that the first named was not Miss Arnot, of course. But the man he was sure he recognized, and the discovery did not altogether surprise him.

"Now, Mr. Raphael, as you saw so much, can you not go farther and tell me what happened while the car stood here in front of the door?"

"To the two in the car?"

"Yes. Did they speak to anybody?"

"They talked very earnestly together at first, and occasionally the young man looked back along the street. What such a pretty woman could find in him——"

"Well, what finally happened?" interrupted Nick.

"Why, a girl—quite a sweet young thing—I have seen her often, by the way—came along the sidewalk. The man hailed her as she passed, and she seemed surprised to see him. She went to the side of the car, and he introduced her to the pretty woman.

"In a moment he opened the door and the girl got into the car. They went away then," said Raphael carelessly.

Nick saw that he had heard about all that was of any importance to him regarding the car, and which the strange being could supply. But he asked:

"One other question, Mr. Raphael. Put it down to my insatiate curiosity, if you will. As you do not go out, and your windows are closed, how did you see all this?"

"Ah, ha! We have finally got to it, have we?" shrilled the legless man. "Come! I will show you. The simplicity of the invention is the marvel of all who see it. And my own improvements and inventions have made it what it is. Follow me."

He jumped down off his stool and trotted on his ducklike "legs" to a door toward the front of the house. He opened this, and Nick saw that it was perfectly dark inside the room.

"Fear not to enter the chamber of mystery," said Raphael, laughing. "Follow me, Sir Detective!"

He entered the dark closet and Nick followed. The door was shut. The detective felt his hand seized by that of the dwarf; the latter's palm was hard and calloused—the effect of his "flying."

"Come hither!" whispered Raphael, and drew Nick into the centre of the dark room.

Nick's hand was dropped. He felt, rather than saw, the little man bound into some kind of a seat, and knew that there was a table between them.

Something snapped, and a hazy light appeared on the table directly before the mystified detective.

"Look down!" said the voice of Raphael, in a sepulchral tone. "It is from down, not up, that wisdom comes. Even Truth was hidden at the bottom of a well. The humility of man brings its own reward in wisdom. Look down!"

Nick did so. There was a blur of light and moving figures on the surface of the table. Then suddenly the thing cleared, and it was as though the detective had been looking into a mirror that reflected the street outside.

He recognized the houses directly opposite—the doctor's door, his lamp on the street, and the nearer sidewalk. A policeman walked along with studied stride.

"Number sixteen hundred and twelve—his name is M'Ginity," said Raphael. "He's courting the cook at the house where you stopped to speak to the servants this evening—three hundred and twenty-two."

A carriage drove rapidly by, but under the lamp on the street it was revealed plainly.

"Doctor Kaiser—rival of our friend, the sawbones over the way. He drives by here both going to and coming from a patient, so that his brother practitioner shall see how often he is called, and gnash his teeth in envy!"

"This is a camera obscura," said Nick, finding his speech. "But I never saw one that worked at night."

"My own invention, sir," said Raphael proudly. "Here comes Mr. Lang—and as usual uncertain in his walk. He is a nice man, but there are too many hotels and cafés where he is known between downtown and his home. And he has promised his wife to walk for his health's sake!" And Raphael chuckled wickedly.

Nick could remain to be entertained no longer.

"I am a thousand times obliged to you," he said to the queer little man. "But as you have told me all you may, and I have seen the basis of your omniscience, will you excuse me? That young girl you say you have seen so often has been abducted, I believe, and I must find her."

"Indeed! it does not surprise me. That common-looking man in the car would be guilty of any ungentlemanly deed, I have no doubt. And of course the lady with him—well, we can excuse many crimes in a beautiful woman!"

"You may," said Nick, somewhat tartly. "I don't!"

He bade the strange man good night and left him in the dark closet satisfying his insatiate curiosity about his neighbors and the people who went past the house. The footman let Nick out of 326, and he hurried back to the Arnot residence.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ENVELOPE.

The discoveries he had made had occupied the better part of an hour, and were, in themselves, not conclusive. The number of the car Nick was sure he had only won in part; but he felt that he could trace the car with the clue the housemaid at 322 had given him.

Regarding what the strange being, Mr. Raphael, at 328, had told him of the occupants of the limousine, Nick was somewhat puzzled. The man whom Raphael called a common-looking fellow Nick identified as Clarry Studiford, and the detective was not at all surprised to learn that that reckless young fellow was mixed up in this seeming case of abduction.

His companion in the car—the beautiful woman—was the puzzling party for Nick Carter. Miss Arnot had not known this woman. Studiford had introduced Sadie Arnot to her.

And the car had been standing right there for the purpose of intercepting the girl when she left Arnot's house. More than that, Studiford and his companion must have known that Miss Arnot would come out at about this hour.

How had they known it? The answer, to Nick's mind, was plain enough. They knew that she would be unexpectedly called out of the house. The letter the missing girl had received in her employer's mail, and which the butler had seen her hide in the bosom of her dress, must have been an appointment to meet somebody near by, and at once, on receipt of the letter.

Sadie Arnot had gone out to keep the appointment, had fallen in with Studiford and his companion, who knew of the appointment, and by some means had been urged to step into their car, and was so driven away.

The question as to why she had not returned was for the future. At this present moment the detective was interested most in getting at the writer of the letter of appointment.

And if Marchant, Mr. Arnot's butler, had been able to find the envelope he had picked up and then cast away, there might be a chance that this discovery was within Nick's grasp!

Nick was assured in his own mind that Philip Arnot knew more of the absence of the girl than he had been willing to tell. He had deliberately neglected mentioning to the detective the fact that Miss Arnot had a twin brother; it was scarcely possible that the millionaire was unaware of that fact himself.

And Arnot had been shut in the study all the previous afternoon, and had burned, Nick was sure, some of Miss Arnot's papers under the grate. Why had her employer gone over the girl's private papers and destroyed some of them before calling on a detective to enter the case? Was there not some mystery about her absence that he did not propose to have discovered?

It looked to Nick as though Philip Arnot had called a detective into the case only when he felt sure that the trail of the abducted girl was so cold, or so covered, that it would be extremely difficult to trace her!

Nick had suspected the man from the first. Had he not felt that Arnot had come to him for a special purpose, other than the finding of Sadie Arnot, he would never have touched the case in the first place. But there was something in Arnot's manner that had puzzled Nick, and the detective did not like being puzzled. He wanted to see to the bottom of the thing, for his own good pleasure.

The connection of Arnot and Clarry Studiford was not hard to fathom. The younger man was poor, and was undoubtedly to be bought by the millionaire promoter for any small villainy that he thought Studiford could manage. The woman with Studiford was somewhat puzzling to Nick Carter, for the detective fancied that the car was one of Arnot's own machines!

Arnot had come downtown this evening to the corner nearest Nick Carter's home in a motor car. He had told Nick the car belonged to a friend, who had gone along after dropping him.

Nick had instructed Patsy—through Joseph—to go out and see if the car was still standing around the corner, and find out who was in it. Word had come back to Nick before he and Arnot had left the detective's domicile that the automobile stood there still, and that the man in it was Clarry Studiford.

Nick had given Patsy his instructions through Joseph, and had verified Patsy's report of the presence of Studiford in the big car, as he went out of his house with Arnot.

Dropping his handkerchief had sent Patsy, with Danny as chauffeur, in pursuit of Studiford, for Nick believed that the presence of the young Tenderloin rounder in Arnot's company was a mystery worth considering.

Now Nick had proved to his own satisfaction that Clarry Studiford had been directly connected with the disappearance of Miss Sadie Arnot. The same machine had been used to carry away the girl, in all probability, that had brought Arnot to Nick's house on this very evening.

The detective wanted to identify this machine, for one thing.

To find out, if possible, who wrote the letter that had evidently called Miss Arnot from the house at such an early hour in the morning was another part of the problem. If the girl had really been taken away, with some promise of harm to herself, Nick was interested enough in her case to do what he could toward solving the mystery and delivering Sadie Arnot from bondage.

The reason for his having been dragged into the case, however, was not at all clear to Nick's mind—unless, indeed, there was something back of it, all that the plotters knew, in the end, would have drawn Nick's attention.

The intention might have been to steer the detective off the main track of the mystery by engaging him

to trace a kidnapped girl. The idea was not impossible.

These suspicions buzzed in Nick's head as he went back to the Arnot house. Philip Arnot himself opened the door for him when he rang the bell. The promoter was evidently very anxious and eager to learn what had kept Nick away so long.

"I began to believe you had deserted me entirely," he declared, when Nick came calmly in.

"And if I had?" queried the detective.

"I wanted to know why."

"If I throw over the case you shall be informed why I do so," returned Nick tartly. "Now! is Marchant ready for me?"

"I can't get a thing out of him. The dog says you forbade him to speak," said Arnot, with disgust.

"Quite so. When I have anything to report to you, Mr. Arnot, I will do so in person. Where is Marchant?"

"Up in the study," grunted the master of the house, going back to the billiard room in a huff.

The detective mounted to the second floor, and found the imperturbable Marchant standing about in the centre of the room where he had previously examined him. He wondered if Marchant never sat down!

"There you are, Marchant," said Nick pleasantly. "What have you to report to me?"

The man's eyes gleamed. Otherwise he betrayed no emotion; but Nick was confident that the butler was secretly excited.

"I did as you requested, Mr. Carter," he said.

"You searched in the paper bin?"

"Yes, sir."

"For the envelope that you threw away?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you find it?"

"I did, sir," declared Marchant, with a note of triumph in his voice.

He drew a much-rumpled scrap of paper from his pocket and tendered it to the detective.

"I am sure this is the envelope, sir. Now that I see it again I recognize the printing in the corner. That was the name—Feltman."

Nick fairly snatched the envelope out of his hand, and the exclamation that sprang to his lips was not to be smothered.

"Not Jake Feltman?" he cried, under his breath.

"It is the business envelope of one Jacob Feltman. The address is a number on Hester Street," said Marchant serenely.

Nick looked long at the envelope in his hand. It had been torn hastily open by the recipient, and had later been crushed into a ball in Marchant's hand and tossed away. It was soiled and wrinkled, but the printed card in the upper left-hand corner was complete, as was the typewritten address.

It had been sent to "Miss Sadie Arnot, No. — East Fifty-seventh Street, New York City." There could be no mistake in that.

And from Jake Feltman, the Hester Street fence and pawnbroker. The entrance of this individual into the mystery surprised Nick Carter mightily, for he knew Feltman well.

Jake Feltman was one of that class of pawnbrokers in New York who are the associates and helpers of all manner of thieves. Were such men as Feltman to be put out of business half the robberies would not occur, for the thieves would be unable to sell their plunder.

There are a great many respectable merchants on Hester Street; but Jake Feltman could not be numbered among them. He was a nuisance in the neighborhood, because he had coming to his shop at all hours of the day and night thieves of every quality, to dispose of their loot. Having a strong political pull and some influence with a certain class of policemen, Jake had continued his nefarious business for years without being punished.

In the case of the Marquis of Dornay's emeralds, Nick Carter had bested the fence in a very sharp game. The detective had recovered the gems, that had been illegally pawned with Feltman by Clarry Studiford for the Broadway actress who had become possessed of the emeralds through her connection with the Marquis of Dornay's son.

This actress, or show girl, Clara Fontaine, had married young Dornay before his unfortunate suicide; but the marriage had not been one that would stand in English law, for the scion of the noble house of Dornay already had a wife living, and no American divorce is legal in the British courts.

The Fontaine woman had actually stolen the emerald necklace—one of the finest of its kind in the world. It had been pawned with Feltman for money to carry on the woman's suit against the Marquis of Dornay in the English courts.

On his part Feltman had planned to have his own pawn shop robbed by a gang of crooks, and the necklace was one of the articles to be taken by them. The shrewd fence knew that the Fontaine woman and her friend Studiford would not dare make trouble for him because of the necklace's "loss," because their possession of the emeralds in the first place was illegal.

On the other hand, Studiford and the woman desired to have the emerald necklace stolen from Feltman, because then the pawnbroker would not dare make the matter public.

It had been a very pretty series of cross plots, which Nick Carter had waded into and taken the trump!

Disguised as a burglar, Nick had engaged himself to Studiford to rob the pawnbroker of the necklace. The detective had done this by making one of the crooks in Feltman's employ—a man called Dutch Pete—hand over the necklace at the juncture when these crooks were "robbing" Feltman's store.

Nick had walked off with the necklace and left Feltman to wonder what had become of it until some weeks later, the cable dispatches to the New York papers reported the return of the Dornay emeralds to

their proper owner, the old marquis, and likewise the fact of the loss of Clara Fontaine's suit in the British courts.

At that time Nick had told his assistants that Feltman was a dangerous criminal. Although there was no legal punishment to be meted out to the "fence" at this time, Nick looked forward to an opportunity to put the Hester Street pawnbroker behind the bars.

And now to find him mixed up in this disappearance of Sadie Arnot, and with Clarence Studiford in the game, too, could not but startle and interest the shrewd detective.

The possible connection between Feltman and Philip Arnot, the supposedly wealthy promoter, was not apparent; but Clarence Studiford was a link between them, that was sure.

And at once Nick's suspicions fell upon another person—the woman in the automobile with Studiford when Sadie Arnot had been lured away!

The meagre description afforded Nick by Raphael, the strange man he had met on this evening, of the handsome woman in the car, might point to Clara Fontaine. She was dark, strikingly dressed, and would appear handsome in the eyes of most men.

Nick suspected that Raphael, in spite of, or because of, his deformity, was a secret admirer of all beautiful women, and was jealous of every man who seemed to be successful with the sex.

Nick knew that Clara Fontaine owned, or had the use of, an automobile. Some admirer had placed the car in her hands. Thoroughness and detail marked Nick Carter's work at all times. He had not been interested in the Fontaine woman without knowing all about her life, her associates, where she went, what she did, and all that was to be discovered about her.

He sat down before the table that had been used by the missing girl and drew out his notebook.

"Marchant," he said to the waiting butler, "your master owns several automobiles, does he not?"

"Two, sir."

"Can you give me their license numbers?"

"Certainly, sir," said the man.

He drew from his own pocket a notebook and fluttered the pages of it. Evidently Marchant took infinite pains to be of use to his master. Nothing escaped his attention.

In a moment he found the record of the numbers of both cars and read them to the detective. Nick nodded, pursing his lips. There was no "3238" connected with any of the figures Marchant repeated.

"That seems to eliminate either of Arnot's cars from this present case," thought the detective. "Ah! here we have it!"

He had found the entry in his own notebook referring to Clara Fontaine's car. The number was there.

"Thirty-two thousand three hundred and eighty," repeated the detective, under his breath. "The housemaid at three hundred and twenty-two did not notice any figure after the two measurements of her own lovely form that so interested her. But there was a cipher there.

"Thirty-two thousand three hundred and eighty is the number of the car in which Sadie Arnot was taken away from this neighborhood, and thirty-two thousand three hundred and eighty is the number of the Fontaine woman's car. I reckon we are getting somewhere now!"

CHAPTER X.

THE NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS.

"You may go, Marchant," said Nick Carter kindly, as he closed his notebook. "I will remain here to look over my notes a few minutes. Tell your master that I may have something to say to him in half an hour. I will be down then."

"Yes, sir," said the butler, and withdrew from the room.

But it was not the notebook that occupied Nick Carter's attention when he was alone. He put the volume back into his pocket and drew out instead the several clippings from newspapers that he had found in one of the drawers of this desk table earlier in the evening.

Those clippings he had taken on suspicion only. Going on the idea that they were entirely foreign to any business that Mr. Arnot might have, Nick believed them to be the personal property of the missing girl.

When the early clippings—those relating to the war in the Philippines—were printed, Philip Arnot had not been heard of much in the financial world, even in Chicago. And he was not the sort of a man, Nick believed, to lug about scraps from the newspapers for any reason whatsoever.

Nick spread out these early clippings, getting them into line according to the dates printed with the dispatches. The first, about the landing of troops and the first skirmish, he read carefully. Aside from the mention of the prominent officers commanding the force there were only three names mentioned:

"There were three casualties; Private Nickerson, Joyce, and Tonra were slightly wounded."

Nick went on to the next slip in rotation. This dealt with a pitched battle, in which the United States troops had come off victorious. Seven men were reported for gallant service, but their names were not given.

The third was the announcement of a hike into the wilderness by "Corporal Charlie Tonra and six men." The fourth was a mere army notice of the advancement of non-commissioned officers. Among them was the promotion of Charles Tonra to color sergeant. This item was a year and four months after the landing of the troops. The private who had been shot in the first skirmish had become first sergeant.

Nick had become interested in this man, Tonra. He wondered if his name ran all through the clippings—

if its presence in the dispatches was the reason the clippings had been saved.

Was Miss Sadie the one who was interested in Charlie Tonra? Who was he? Where did he come from, and what became of him?

To answer these questions it seemed wise to continue the examination of the clippings. Some had no mention of the sergeant at all, but were merely reports of the movements of certain troops or their battles with the natives.

In one, however, Aguinaldo had been disturbing a certain neighborhood and Sergeant Tonra had made a dash for him and had come near catching the wily Philipino. Had he been successful doubtless Sergeant Tonra would have won a commission.

Then came the article referring to the loss, or abandonment by their column, of Sergeant Tonra and a file of men. They were given up for dead; but in another short paragraph, dated months after the one referring to the loss of the men, the fact was noted that "Sergeant Charles Tonra and two men of the ill-fated expedition against the hill outlaws arrived in the town to-day. Their captivity among the fierce tribes has been told in the former dispatches."

This seemed to conclude the several items relating to Charles Tonra. No other name was more than twice mentioned in the dispatches cut from the old newspapers. Nick, therefore, concluded that, if there was any personal value to the clippings at all, it referred to Tonra.

"If I had anybody to ask regarding the early life of this girl I might spot the clue to the mystery," thought Nick. "But I cannot trust Arnot himself. He is up to his neck in the business, whatever it is. He is in cahoots with Clarence Studiford, I know; and Sadie Arnot went off in a motor car with Studiford.

"Studiford stands in with Jake Feltman, and it was a letter from Feltman, I feel sure, that lured the girl out of this house. Why the dickens they have brought me into the case is a puzzler—unless," pursued the detective, "their idea is to get me so twisted in a knot about the disappearance of the girl that I will overlook something of much more importance that they are mixed up in.

"Now, when those emeralds disappeared so nicely out of Feltman's hands, Studiford and the Fontaine woman were dead sore on the fence. But perhaps they have all three learned how they were 'done,' and have come together again in another game.

"This brings me back to the first question, however: What and how is Arnot connected with Feltman and the Fontaine woman? And what is he to gain by the kidnapping of the girl who seems to have been so valuable to him?

"Now, having in my possession only the most meagre facts about Miss Sadie's early life, and knowing absolutely nothing about her private character, it seems to me that I have mighty little information with which to frame up any theory.

"I cannot guess why she was made to disappear—if she was really kidnapped—or why she should stay away of her own volition. And, to get back to these things under my nose, of what value have the clippings in the case?

"Who is, or was, Tonra? Was he the girl's friend? Was he a friend of her brother's—the twin brother that Arnot refrained from speaking about when he let me into this case?

"The—twin—brother—ha!" Nick muttered this, staring down at the several clippings before him on the table. His hand reached, almost involuntarily, for the bell that stood on the table and was evidently a servant's call.

He rang it. The tones had scarcely died through the room when Marchant appeared.

"You rang, sir?" asked the butler, and Nick saw that he was still excited.

"Yes."

"I answered it myself, sir. Can I do anything for you?"

"Can I see the girl, Ella, again?"

"Certainly, sir," said Marchant, though there was distinct disappointment in his voice.

He went out again softly, and Nick did not have to wait long for the appearance of the housemaid.

"You got some more questions to ask me, sir?" she demanded. "I hope you'll let us all go to bed pretty soon. The hours is long here."

"I am sorry. But I promise you," said Nick, "that this shall be the last call you have from us to-night."

"Oh, sir! I don't mind doing your bidding, sir," said the girl, smiling.

"Very well. Answer me this one question: Did you ever hear Miss Sadie say what her brother's name was, and if so, what is it?"

"Charlie," said the girl promptly. "I remember, for I got a brother Charlie."

"Thank you, my dear," said Nick, with satisfaction. "Now, as far as I am concerned, you may go directly to bed—and I hope you will have a good night's sleep."

She curtsied and went out. The detective carefully put aside the clippings referring to Charlie Tonra's adventures in the Philippines, his lips pursed, his mind evidently laboring in a mire of doubt.

By and by he shuffled the several newer newspaper articles. They were the fulsome press-agent notices of "Captain Jack McCormick's Philippine Village," then exhibiting at the great pleasure city by the sea.

Nick faithfully read them through. They seemed useless to him in his present quest until he reached the third. Then, amid other announcements. was the following paragraph:

"Among the quieter and more inoffensive tribes represented in this marvelous village—this cosmopolitan collection of interesting nations, as it were—are several representatives of the Bontoc and Igorrote tribes, known among the milder natives of the islands as head hunters, and possibly cannibals. These most interesting, but until recently savage, people were little known even to the American invaders during the war in the Philippines, until Sergeant Charles Tonra lived among them for several months and brought back to civilization accounts of the mountaineers which interested scientists and traders. Sergeant Tonra, who is Captain Jack's right-hand man in the government of the great village, has full charge of the Bontocs and Igorrotes. In fact, if it were not for the doughty sergeant, these wild peoples would never have come so far from their beloved hills."

"Sergeant Tonra—Charlie Arnot," muttered Nick, smiting the table with his fist. "If that's not the answer to this little mystery, I'll—well, I'll eat the clippings.

"For some reason Charlie Arnot served in the Philippines under an assumed name. He even gained distinction under that name, and evidently from these later clippings it is not generally known that his real name is Arnot.

"The why of the change of name doesn't matter—not just now. That his sister knew of the masquerade seems probable. Maybe I have wronged Philip Arnot. Perhaps he does not know that her brother is alive, and therefore he did not speak of him to me.

"However, this young man is evidently very much alive. He is here at Coney Island, engaged in relieving the great American public of some of its shekels through the medium of a Philippine show. I'll ask Patsy about that. He'll know what kind of a game it is.

"And say! if this Sergeant Tonra is the twin brother of the missing Sadie Arnot, she's no kid. Arnot did not say how old she was; but she's little and slight, and that makes her seem younger than she is, I suppose; everybody speaks of her as a young girl. Humph!"

Nick slipped the clippings into his pocket again. For the present he was satisfied that he had gone as far as he could go. He must turn his attention to matters outside the house from now on.

He arose and approached the study door. As he turned the knob Marchant appeared before him. The eagerness of the butler showed itself in his eyes.

"And now, Marchant?" asked Nick Carter kindly.

"Oh, sir! have you discovered anything?"

"About what?"

"Why, about Miss Sadie's going away, sir," murmured the serving man.

"Yes. I have learned that she is certainly gone," said Nick, with a grim smile. "I have learned that she was called out of the house by a decoy letter. By the way, say nothing about that letter, Marchant."

"Not if it costs me my place, sir," declared the butler earnestly.

"It won't. Your master would be a fool to give you your walking papers. And he's no fool," muttered Nick Carter, "never mind what he may be."

"And what else have you learned, Mr. Carter?" begged the butler, who evidently had become seriously rattled by the mystery and had quite lost his usual self-control.

"That she went away in an automobile and, if she comes back at all, she will return in the same automobile, and that before many hours!" declared Nick Carter, not unwilling to mystify the old butler a little further. "But I would not worry, Marchant. She is in no personal danger, I feel sure. By the way, Marchant, how old should you say Miss Arnot was?"

"She looked quite young, sir. But she must have been nearly thirty. Ladies with her complexion and hair do not show their age, sir."

"Quite true, Marchant. Now I will go down and speak with your master."

Arnot heard him descending the stairs and he hurried out to intercept Nick on the mat.

"That confounded Marchant says you said you would have something to say to me before you went out, Carter," said the millionaire promoter anxiously.

"I have," said Nick briefly, looking at the man.

"What is it, Carter?" demanded the other quickly.

"It is 'Good night!' was the prompt reply, and Nick turned on his heel and passed through the open door.

"By the living jingoes!" yelled Arnot. "You won't leave me like that?"

"Come to my house in the morning. I will have something more to say to you then," said the detective sternly, and he walked rapidly away from the house.

CHAPTER XI.

A BUSY HOUR.

Nick went into the nearest place, on the nearest avenue, where there was a private telephone booth. First he called up Joseph at the house and asked if Patsy had returned.

He was informed that the car was just then at the door and that his assistant was eager to report. But Nick told Joseph to send young Garvan, and the car, to the shop where he, Nick, was then engaged. He would talk to Patsy in person.

Telling Joseph to look up Chick and to tell the first assistant to hold himself in readiness for a sudden call, Nick shut off that wire and asked central to connect him with the office of Captain Jack McCormick's Philippine Village at Coney Island.

It was near eleven o'clock now and, as it was a fine evening, the detective was sure that the island would be full of people, and, without doubt, the Philippine Village woud be well populated by visitors as well as regular inhabitants. At any cost, however, he was determined to reach the head of the show, and to a girl who answered him when the connection was made he demanded to speak with Captain Jack.

"Don't put me off by saying he is busy," said Nick, before the girl had half spoken the objection. "I know he's busy. But this is a matter that he must attend to personally, and it is so important a matter that he cannot delegate anybody else to attend to it. Tell him that I must speak to him instantly."

He managed to get the girl worked up so that she believed her employer must be called. The captain was lecturing regarding his natives, their manners and customs, before the "big show." He cut the talk short and hurried to the phone.

"Who is it, and what's the trouble?" demanded the captain.

"I am a detective. My name is Nick Carter," said Nick earnestly. "What I say to you I want you to consider of a private character, and you must keep it secret."

"Oh, I must, must I? Holy toads! who do you think you are to boss *me* around?" demanded the owner of the Coney Island show in rising wrath.

"You have a man named Sergeant Tonra working with the show?"

"Oh, the deuce!" ejaculated McCormick. "What's happened Charley now?"

"Isn't he with you?"

"Holy toads!" repeated the Captain. "Didn't you just say you were a detective? I suppose Charley's been pulled, hasn't he? And I'm missing him like kildee!"

"He may have been pulled," said Nick; "but not by me. I want to find him. If he isn't with you, where do you suppose he is?"

"Loaded to the guards somewhere—loaded with bugjuice!" declared Captain Jack in disgust. "He went away from here four days ago. I haven't set eyes on him since. And, judging from past performances, I won't see him until he has spent every last cent he had in his clothes."

"How much did he have?" demanded Nick quickly.

"About a hundred dollars."

"From your knowledge of the man, how long do you think that would last him?"

"Anywhere from ten hours to two days. He's overstaying his time now, I tell you!"

"And he is a periodical?"

"That's what. He's been mighty steady of late, however. This is the first outbreak since we opened the show in June. He had a big thing on the docket, and Charley was keeping straight till he had pulled it through."

"What do you mean?" asked Nick. "What sort of a big thing?"

"I don't know as it's any of your business; but he had a big bunch of mining stock, I understood, and some fellows in Wall Street were after it. It was something that Charley has had for years and never thought would amount to a row of beanhills. But there's been a fellow down here talking to him about it——"

"What sort of a fellow?"

"A broker chap. Name's Studiford, I believe. An easy spender and a good fellow generally. But Charley kept straight while Studiford was about. I saw to that."

"And do you think he has gone off with this broker?"

"No. I know who he went off with. It seems, as near as I can figure it out, that Charley owns pretty nearly all of this mine, and the mine has suddenly become necessary to a big corporation out West—Wyoming, I reckon it is.

"But Charley thought that if it looked so good to these Wall Street people it must be a valuable hole in the ground after all, and he was talking to me about raising money and developing the mine himself.

"He went to town with a chap to look up capital, so

he said. I didn't like the fellow's looks that he went with—a Jew he was, and a shifty-looking one."

"By the name of Feltman?" interposed Nick eagerly.

"That is the name he gave—Jake Feltman."

"Well? What else, Captain McCormick?"

"That's all. He took Charley to town. If I could have left the village I'd certainly gone with him. I didn't know how Feltman came to meet Charley, and I didn't like his manner.

"I knew the old hoss' failing, you see. Why, if Charley hadn't been a periodical he'd been a major general instead of a high private. He's one of the finest fellows, and one of the handsomest, that was ever turned out at the foundry. But there's that queer streak in him. If he gets a taste of booze he has to go the limit before he is himself again."

"So you really cannot help me to find him?" said Nick.

"Only find that Jake Feltman, and you'll discover him, I reckon."

"Thanks! I'll do so. And if your friend chances to turn up meanwhile, just call my number, will you? I haven't any warrant for him; instead, it will be much to his advantage, perhaps, if he and I meet."

Nick next called up police headquarters and asked that a general alarm might be sent out for Charles Tonra, onetime sergeant in the United States army, describing him as best he could from his memory of what the housemaid, Ella, had said about Charles Arnot's picture, and what Philip Arnot had said regarding the missing girl whom Nick believed to be Sergeant Tonra's sister.

He made out a fairly decent description, at any rate, and set the police department to work on the matter. By that time, when Nick came out of the telephone booth, his car, with Danny and Patsy, was at the door of the shop.

"I'm confounded glad to see you, chief," said Patsy, the moment Nick had come to the car. "I come near sending Danny back to report to you, as it was, while I kept tabs on that fellow all night."

"Where did you leave him?" inquired Nick.

"In a house over beyond New Rochelle. And it's such a rotten-looking shanty, and it's so lonely thereabout, that I believe something queer is being pulled off there. At least, I saw a fellow there that you said was in that mess with Feltman over the emeralds, you know. I knew him right away—Dutch Pete. Where he hangs out is no sweet-smelling roost, you can bet!"

"Beyond New Rochelle, eh?" said Nick thoughtfully. "I remember that Dutchy told me that was where Feltman had appointed a rendezvous for that gang of burglars to meet him with the stuff they stole from the store. What you tell me is interesting."

"It is over a bad road, the last of the drive," said Patsy. "I don't believe there's much travel past that old shanty. It must have been a tavern away back in Revolutionary days.

"There is a series of sheds, or barns, beside it, and they ran their car into one of them. I hung about and heard Studiford giving orders to Dutch Pete and the chauffeur. He told them he'd want the car to run back in by five o'clock."

"How long did it take you to run back?" demanded Nick quickly.

"An hour and a half—and we missed our way once."

"That is all right, then," said Nick. "We can make that easy, as it is not yet midnight. There was nobody in the car with Studiford?"

"No. But on the way uptown he stopped some time at a hotel in the eighties—East Eighty-seventh Street, wasn't it, Danny?"

"It was!" declared the chauffeur emphatically. "The hotel was called The Orowoc."

"Indeed?" said Nick. He remembered that the show girl, Clara Fontaine, had apartments in that very hotel the last they knew of her whereabouts.

Finally, after chewing the cud of reflection for some minutes, Nick said:

"Patsy, go downtown to Jake Feltman's haunts and rout out Pop-eye to help you." Pop-eye was a street gamin who had been helping Nick in several cases of late. "Find Jake if you can, or, at least, see what he has been up to lately."

"Gee, chief! do you think that chap is in this game? Chick tells me it's an abduction case."

"It's more than that," said Nick briefly. "It's a big thing, Patsy, and I believe Feltman has his finger in the pie. And if he gets that finger burned I shall be so much the better suited! As I have told you before, I am determined to get that Jew right, in time, and put him where the dogs won't bite him!"

"All right, chief," said Patsy. "Shall you need the car?"

"Yes. Take a taxi downtown; but not too near Jake's place. You'll find Pop-eye at home in Rutgers Street, I hope."

"I'm on my way," said Patsy, and hurried off at once.

Nick went back into the shop and used the telephone

again. This time he called Chick to the phone, and that ready assistant had been warned by Joseph so that he was "on the job."

Nick explained in detail the discoveries he had made regarding the matter Philip Arnot had brought to his attention, following the notes Chick himself had taken behind the screen.

"I am sure," he added to his first assistant, "that there is really some plot against the girl, and that she is in trouble. And I have every belief now that Philip Arnot is in the game.

"I think that I was called into it for a bluff. Arnot is playing the open and aboveboard business. He feared that inquiries would be made regarding his private secretary. Her absence would be talked about by the servants, at least.

"So, with the other plotters—who, I believe, are Feltman and Studiford—he agreed that a detective's assistance was necessary. Who should they get? Feltman would suggest me in a minute, and I tell you why. He knows I have got it in for him, and he is well aware of the part I played in his loss of the Dornay emeralds.

"It would suit him right down to the ground to catch me in some trick that would trip me up. I should not be surprised if they figured I would consider the kidnapping a fake and would throw the thing over. That, I fancy, was what Arnot was aiming at.

"He was chary of information, and acted in such a manner that I would suspect him of not being in good faith. Finding that I was not given his full confidence, and believing that the disappearance of the girl was the result of some family trouble, I would be likely to step aside and refuse to have anything further to do with the case.

"And to tell you the truth, Chick, I was more than half inclined to do that until I struck the trail of Studiford and Feltman. Arnot did not expect me to do that.

"Quite likely Studiford was hanging about our house in the car while Arnot interviewed me, for the purpose of learning if I would go into the matter at all. Finding that I was going to investigate, he knew what to do—he followed some prearranged plan which has carried him into the country, after a stop to see Clara Fontaine.

"Now, Chick, I want you to go and see Mulligan. Get some kind of a warrant, even if it is a fake one, and take a cop to the Orowoc and route out Clara Fontaine. Search her place. See if the girl, Sadie, is there. She might be, you know.

"Meanwhile, I will let Danny drive me out to that house beyond New Rochelle, and I'll have a squint at it. As the matter stands now, I am considerably interested in Sadie Arnot and in that twin brother of hers who goes by the name of Sergeant Tonra."

"That's a funny game, Nick," said Chick. "What do you suppose is at the start of it? What has made Arnot, and Feltman, and the others, pitch into this brother and sister?"

"That's plain enough now," returned the chief. "The mining stock, of course. Money is at the root of most trouble in this world—sometimes the lack of it, oftener the craze for getting it!

"The Arnot twins evidently have a bunch of stock in a mine that has lain dormant for years. Suddenly it is discovered by outsiders, or by the people owning the minority of the stock, that the thing is very valuable.

"It might be that Studiford, as a broker in mine shares, learned of it. He goes to Philip Arnot, and they plan to get hold of the majority stock. It is discovered that the owners are this brother and sister.

"Now, Arnot may, or may not, have told me the truth about Sadie coming to work for him. I fancy, however, that on that point he was exact. No matter how useful she was to him, however, the mine would be more useful!" said Nick.

"Studiford could not make any arrangement with this Sergeant Tonra to buy the mine; the twins wanted to develop it themselves, and so Feltman was rung into the game. Feltman would have money to lend on almost any proposition you could name, providing the profits to him were big enough.

"Now, what they have done with the sergeant, who is really Charley Arnot, is to get him off somewhere, keep him drunk, and possibly make him sign over his shares, or agree to some tricky arrangement that will put the mine into the hands of the plotters at small cost to themselves."

"But the girl?" asked Chick. "Why take the trouble to kidnap her?"

"She is probably an equal owner with her brother. The mine may have been a joint legacy from some relative. Her signature is just as necessary as his. That is the only reason that I am keeping on this case to the finish. I really believe the girl is being abused."

"I reckon you've figured it out about right, Nick," said his assistant. "Now I'll hustle about the Fontaine matter. What will I say to the girl if I find her?"

"Sadie Arnot?"

"Yes."

"Ask her if she wants any help. Tell her the circumstances of my being drawn into the case. Warn her against signing away any right she may have in the mine until the matter has been fully ventilated. That will be about all, I guess."

Nick closed the conversation over the wire with these words, left the shop, and in two minutes Danny was driving him at a goodly speed toward the extreme northerly portion of the city.

CHAPTER XII.

TWO IN AN AUTOMOBILE.

Just at dawn a man in a long dustcoat, goggles, and a cap cranked up an automobile in a ramshackle old shed some distance back in the country from the main highway, and beyond the beautiful town of New Rochelle. When the engine was running smoothly, he got into the seat under the wheel and started the car.

It ran slowly out of the shed, through a littered and ill-kept barnyard, and through a gateway to a rutty road. There was an old, rambling house off to one side, but the machine did not go near that. It ran a few rods to the corner of a tumbledown fence, and there stopped. The chauffeur tooted his horn.

The hills to the eastward hid the first beams of the sun, so that the valley here was still quite dark. The sky was brightening fast, but there was curling mist that half hid most objects, and beyond the house a thick grove of evergreens cast their deeper shadow across the road and the field.

As the horn tooted a second time the bushes parted beside the road—the side farthest from the house—and a clean-cut, alert face appeared for an instant in the opening. A door closed sharply somewhere—presumably at the house—and the face disappeared, only a shower of dewdrops from the disturbed twigs showing where the man had been.

In a moment the signal of the chauffeur was answered by the appearance of a man and a girl, who came hurriedly down the weed-grown path from the house.

"Sorry to get you out so early," the man was saying. "But if you want to do this, and get him away, the quicker we are at it the better. Believe me, Miss Arnot, I am terribly sorry that this occurred. And I feel myself somewhat to blame for it."

"You are to blame, in a way. But I do not believe your sin was intentional," was the response in a clear, pleasant voice.

The man's face appeared again in the bushes. The door of the limousine was jerked open by the companion of the young woman, she stepped inside, and he followed her.

"Hustle, Bonwit!" he said to chauffeur. "Hit the high places only. We're in a hurry, you know."

"I hope Charley will be safe until I return. I do not think much of that Dutchman," said the girl, as the door of the limousine was closed.

The car started slowly. Instantly out of the bushes darted the man lying in wait. He sprang lightly up behind, seized the edge of the roof of the car, and drew himself up until he lay upon it. It was done so quickly and so noiselessly that neither the chauffeur nor the two in the car saw or heard him.

Up the road a piece, however, another pair of eyes was watching the scene. The action of the spy was noted by this spectator. When the big limousine had got well under way with the man on its roof, this observer went back to a crossroad, where another car was standing. He cranked up and in a few moments was racing over a most uneven road toward the main highway.

Meanwhile the first car—the one on the roof of which the eavesdropper crouched—was bumping over its own uneven road. The situation of the man on the roof was not comfortable.

One of the windows of the limousine was dropped for air, and the listener could hear all that was said inside the car. The man seemed to be earnest in his protestations to the girl.

"Really, Miss Arnot, I condemn myself for ever entering into this business," he said again. "I swear I had nothing to do with getting your brother under the influence of liquor. That did not occur, as I understand it, until after he had made his agreement with Feltman, the papers had been signed, and he himself had suggested taking a drink to bind the bargain.

"Feltman is not a nice man, I know. But he is merely a money lender. His interest ends with the passing over of the money and the receipt of the agreement, signed by you as well as your brother. Of course, the agreement is not valid unless you sign it, too."

"That is true enough. Grandfather left the mine to us, share and share alike. He always had faith in it; but Charley never thought it would amount to anything—not until lately. Then he sent to me for the papers. He would not come to Mr. Philip Arnot's house, you understand. Poor boy! he is so ashamed of his career!" and the girl's voice fell pathetically.

"A lot of fellows have been cursed as he is, and have pulled out of it in time. And you are doing the right thing with him now," declared her companion.

"I hope so, Mr. Studiford—I hope so. At any rate, I mean to make this agreement with Feltman and take the money and Charley, and go out there to the mine. Perhaps he will keep straight in the West. There may not be the temptations there that there are here. I was afraid when he went into that Philippine show.

"I came on to New York with the direct intention of trying to do something with this old mine. I knew that Mr. Philip Arnot had bought up the outside shares. I knew well enough he did not care anything more for us than he did for so many strangers. We were nothing to him; money was everything. Perhaps I ought not to speak so to you about him—you were his friend——"

"Only his broker," said Studiford quickly.

"Well, in business that means nothing, I know," said the girl. "Mr. Arnot has been kind enough to me since I have been in his employ. But I have given him full value for his money."

"I am sure you have," said Studiford earnestly.

"I wanted to know why Philip Arnot desired to get hold of the controlling interest in the mine. It was full of water. But I found that he and his syndicate own the property below it, and that by opening a tunnel they could easily drain our old mine—and the real vein was on our property.

"Now, with this money Feltman will advance, we can institute pumps and clear the mine ourselves. Don't you think so, Mr. Studiford?"

The man cleared his throat before replying. Then he said hesitatingly:

"You know I am supposed to be engaged by the other side, Miss Arnot. I would not stand to see your brother abused; but I ought not to give an opinion against my employer's interests."

"Mr. Philip Arnot is no employer of mine now!" declared the girl, laughing. "I shall send to Mrs. Garrity for my things, and Charley and I will leave for the West just as soon as we get the money from this Feltman. He must be a very coarse man, from what he wrote to me. Telling me that my brother was—was intoxicated on his hands, and for me to come and take him away! I cannot tell you how shocked I was for the moment! I rushed out for a cab——"

"I can understand it," said Studiford. "And I consider it very fortunate indeed that I chanced to be uptown in this machine with Mrs. Fontaine to act as chaperon for us."

"It was very kind of you—and of her—to take me in and help me as you did. I could never have found that lonely old house of Feltman's had your chauffeur not known the country."

"Well, Feltman is coarse," said Studiford, quickly changing the subject. "But it wasn't bad of him to take your brother out yonder, away from the stuff. Dutchy may be a poor nurse, but he means all right."

"I do not believe Charley has been without liquor since he was brought there. He is not himself yet. He acts as though he was under the influence of a drug of some kind," said the girl in a worried tone. "Oh, I shall not feel safe regarding him until we are out of the city and away from it all. I hope this Feltman will be satisfied to hand over the money as soon as he gets my signature."

The car, long before this, had come into the smoother highway and was bowling along toward the city at a goodly pace. Just before them another car—a big red touring car—shot out of a side road. It took the right of way for several rods, and the chauffeur, who was alone in the car, kept looking back.

The situation was lonely. There wasn't a house in sight. The sun, now rising above the hilltops, revealed the landscape more plainly.

The shadow of the limousine stretched along the ground beside the spinning car, and the two inside glanced that way and saw the moving shadow. The girl noted something else. She seized her companion's arm and cried:

"See there! There's a man on the roof!"

The crouching figure of the eavesdropper was plainly reflected in connection with the traveling shadow of the limousine.

Studiford hailed their chauffeur. At the same moment the car ahead slowed down, and turned across the road so as to cause the limousine to stop. Both machines came to a prompt standstill.

Before Studiford could leap from the car Nick Carter was down from the roof and Danny had left his own machine up ahead and had run back to join in if there was to be a fracas.

But there was no trouble. Studiford recognized Nick Carter and literally and figuratively "threw up his hands."

"Served 'em right," he said sullenly. "I told Feltman and Arnot they couldn't fool *you*. But you can't get me on anything, Mr. Carter. I have been mighty careful of that."

"Not for helping to kidnap the girl?" asked Nick, with a laugh.

"She'll deny that herself. I did what I did because I was worried about what they might do to her if Feltman used some of his thugs. I was sorry for Miss Arnot, anyway."

The girl was leaning out of the door of the car to listen.

"What does it mean?" she demanded curiously. "Why have you stopped us?"

"Introduce me, Studiford," commanded Nick Carter. "Tell Miss Arnot exactly who I am. Then you get into the machine with my man, and I'll take your place here. I want you to tell your chauffeur to keep right on to the place where he was first instructed to go."

"That was Feltman's," said Studiford sullenly.

"So I presumed," said Nick. "As much as you were sorry for the girl, you were going to see her fleeced, just the same?"

"How could I help it?" demanded the young man desperately. "I am in the hands of these thieves myself!"

"Meaning Arnot and Feltman?"

"Yes."

"You come to me in a day or two," said Nick quietly, "and perhaps I can show you how to cut loose from them—but you must be willing to drop all your old associates, including that woman up at the Orowoc. Mind that, now!"

Studiford turned away without a word, and entered Danny's car. Nick got into the limousine, sat down in front of the astonished and anxious young woman, and while they continued their journey toward the city the detective went over in detail all that he had discovered since being called into the case the evening before.

Miss Sadie Arnot was a pretty smart young woman, but her anxiety about her unfortunate brother had rather warped her judgment. Charles Arnot had disgraced himself and his family, when he was a boy, by yielding to the appetite for liquor which had been born in him.

He had tried to cure himself by going into the army, under an assumed name, and had distinguished himself while in the Philippines. But his misfortune kept him from going higher than sergeant.

Since his discharge he had tried various things, to fail in each because of the drink. Now he had come near to wrecking their fortunes by selling out the mine he and his sister owned for a mere pittance; for Nick found that the partially signed papers were really bills of sale of the twins' right and title in the mine.

Nick made Feltman give the papers up. It was another case of stopping the Hester Street "fence" before he had actually accomplished a crime, so there was no punishment coming to him. The detective knew, however, that Feltman's time would yet arrive.

"That fellow is born to spend some time in jail—and I'll put him there!" declared Nick Carter.

He sent Chick, after his fruitless mission to Clara Fontaine's apartments at the Orowoc, out to the old house in the country with Miss Arnot, and together they brought away Charley Arnot, who was being kept plied with liquor there by Dutch Pete, Feltman's henchman. Nick found good quarters for the brother and sister where Sadie could nurse Charlie back to health.

Meanwhile, Nick himself, having recovered from his strenuous night's work, sat in his study about nine o'clock, when Philip Arnot was ushered in by Joseph. None of the other conspirators had communicated with the millionaire promoter, and he came in smiling.

"Good morning, Mr. Carter!" he said, in his breezy way.

"Sit down," said Nick sternly, pointing to a chair.

"Well, you were rather sudden with me last night," said the man.

"And I am going to be more sudden with you this morning," interposed Nick. "I have mighty little to say to you. This will suffice: Miss Arnot and her brother are found, are together; Feltman has given up the papers relating to the Arnot mine, and young Studiford is on the run. You are the only one I have to settle with."

Arnot had sprung up, his mouth ajar, his eyes filled with surprise. He could not speak.

"Don't you ever come to me with a fake case again. It is bound to cost you more than you figure on," declared the detective sharply. "But this one won't cost you that retainer, at least." And he flipped the thousand-dollar bill toward the millionaire. "I don't take money from such as you, and my night's work has cost you many times that thousand. Good day to you, Mr. Philip Arnot.

"This has been a nice, easy, kid-gloved case," added Nick Carter, as the visitor, with his thousand dollars, slunk out of the door; "but I don't fancy the kind. I hate to mix up with men as mean as Mr. Philip Arnot!"

THE END.

The next number (673) will contain "In the Nick of Time; or, Carter Finishes the Feltman Affair."

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THE LOST TALISMAN.

Mr. Robert Normond, a shipowner of New Bedford, was a gentleman universally respected. His affections, after the death of an amiable, loving wife, were centred in his son, William—a wild, daring youth, famed from boyhood for feats of bravery and strength.

He was a good-hearted lad, somewhat willful, it is true, but never opposing his father, whom he liked for many reasons.

Living under the latter's roof was a mean, good-for-nothing scamp, named Benjamin Hatch, the shipowner's nephew, whom he had taken when the child was left an orphan, at the age of three years. Benjamin was now grown to a dissipated youth of nineteen, who was forever studying how he could contrive to obtain the greater portion of his uncle's money when Normond should be carried off by that dreaded disease, consumption, which for some years had crippled his strength.

He knew that his uncle, despising his profligate ways, would not leave him much—in fact, the shipowner had told him so on more than one occasion.

William Normond, the son, wanted to go to sea; but his father withheld his consent until the boy's eighteenth year, when he permitted him to ship before the mast on the whaler *Dolphin,* Captain Trueman.

Just before the vessel was ready to sail Mr. Normand took his son aside.

"I have consented to your going to sea because I think it will be good for you, make you stronger and more manly. The ship will be gone three years, at the least, by which time, I feel a presentiment, I shall be no more. I will leave my whole fortune in trust to my friend, Lawyer Biggs, who, the moment you present him with this talisman, will put you in possession."

The talisman which Mr. Normond gave to his son was a valuable diamond ring, worth many thousands of dollars—a family heirloom, which had passed through many different hands.

William looked at the ring as he placed it on his finger, and was almost dazzled by its brilliancy.

"You had better not wear it," suggested Mr. Normond, "as you may in that case lose it. Keep it safe somewhere—preserve it carefully, for the losing of it might give you considerable trouble in obtaining your money. In fact, you might, if you should part with this jewel, never succeed in getting the fortune. Mr. Biggs, who has never seen you—who, in fact, has not yet arrived from his tour in Europe—could not give you a cent unless you should present the diamond, which I shall describe to him as the sign by which he may know who you are. My reason for adopting this method, instead of making a regular will, is that I fear the cunning of my nephew, who might contrive to steal the document, or obtain it in some underhand way. I have known him to perform tricks of almost superhuman cunning, and my last words to you are these, that you look out for him."

"Ay, ay," answered Will; "but perhaps you think Benjamin worse than he really is."

Mr. Normond, however, shook his head in the negative, and having repeated his caution parted with his son.

On the next morning the *Dolphin* put out to sea. Away she went bowling merrily along, finally plunging her bows into the Atlantic. William was learning the names of some of the ropes from an old, gray-headed tar, when he beheld, emerging from the cabin, one of the loveliest young creatures he had ever seen. This person, who was the captain's sister, he subsequently learned was about sixteen years old. She was tall and sylphlike, but well rounded, with a step like Juno's, and soft, clear brown eyes that seemed to look right into your heart, with that mild, truthful expression difficult to describe.

Next day William, being at the wheel, felt the girl's robe brush against him as she moved toward the lee side of the deck. That mere touch of her dress made the young man thrill all over; and as he met her eyes his own cheeks seemed to reflect the blush upon hers. With his mind full of her attractions, he reached forward, when what was his surprise to see his Cousin Benjamin emerge from the forecastle.

"Well met!" Benjamin exclaimed, laughing. "I heard you were going to sea, Bill, and I took a notion that I would take a trip with you. Knowing that uncle would not have consented, I thought, after shipping, that my best plan would be to do as I have done—remain concealed in the hold until the vessel was well out to sea."

William was not overpleased with the meeting. Still, he had nothing against his cousin, who had always seemed friendly enough to him. The two resolved to mess and bunk together, and Benjamin proposed that they should stand by each other through everything.

Benjamin was not long in discovering that Bill had fallen in love with Miss Trueman, the captain's sister; that the two, pleased with each other's society, would frequently converse on the quarter-deck. Ben, secretly jealous, loving the girl himself—as well as he was capable of loving—vainly endeavored to ingratiate himself in her favor. She had conceived an involuntary dislike toward him from the first.

"Bill," whispered Benjamin to his cousin, one evening, "I would not advise you to get too thick with the cap's sister. She has heard you will be rich and is after your money."

"How do you know that, sir?" inquired Bill indignantly.

"I am sure of it. I overheard her say to her brother that you were rich."

"That proves nothing. Let me hear no more of this," he added sternly.

He had himself informed the girl that he would have plenty of money at some future time—had even told her about the diamond ring. He remembered having seen her eyes brighten and her cheeks flush at the time, but he then had thought nothing of it.

Now, however, the poison dropped into his mind by his cousin began to work. Suspicion, hitherto scarcely ever troubling him, clouded his spirit.

Soon after the girl, with ready intuition, divined his thoughts from some words which escaped him while in her presence. Her brown eyes flashed, tears came to them—she gave him one look, then, with stately walk, swept into the cabin.

"Miserable little bauble," muttered Bill sadly, an hour after, as he leaned across the lee rail, and, full of deep grief, eyed the ring, "thou art the cause of all my troubles. She will never speak to me again. I have lost her love forever."

At this time the ship lay becalmed. There was not a breath of air, and the sails hung loosely against the masts. Bill remained dreamily gazing down into the still waters, when, some person jostling his arm rudely, the ring dropped from his hand into the sea!

He turned to behold his cousin.

"A curse upon my awkwardness!" exclaimed Benjamin. "What was that you dropped?"

Without replying, Bill, throwing off his jacket and pumps, jumped into the sea.

With him dove another—Benjamin, who had also divested himself of his shoes and jacket.

He well knew what Bill had dropped, for, concealed by the fore hatch, he had overheard every word Mr. Normond had said to his son on the morning before the vessel sailed.

Bill was the first to come up after the dive. He had not seen the ring, and the moment Ben rose to the surface Bill exclaimed:

"Did you see it?"

"No," answered the other, shaking his head; "it is lost forever, whatever it was."

Bill, when the two were aboard, went into explanations.

"A sad affair," said Benjamin. "I hope it will not cause you trouble."

The loss of the ring troubled Bill less than the loss of Isabel Trueman's love. He endeavored on several occasions to speak to her, but somehow she always contrived to elude him. Once or twice, however, he caught her eye and fancied that its expression was softened.

Months later the vessel reached Honolulu, where Bill found a letter, informing him of the death of his father.

"Owing to the loss of that ring!" he exclaimed, one evening, several weeks after, "I shall probably be deprived of every cent of what belongs to me! Alas! but what is such loss compared to the loss of my sweet Isabel?"

Isabel stood partially screened by the mizzenmast. She now stepped forward, and touched the young man on the shoulder.

"Here!" she said—"here, sir, is your ring."

And, in fact, she put the jewel in his hand.

"Dear girl! How came you by this?"

"Your cousin went aloft," she replied, "a few minutes since. His foot slipped, and he was obliged to struggle violently to keep from falling. As he did so, something glittering in the moonlight dropped from him to my feet. I stooped, recognized the diamond ring, and so resolved to give it to its rightful owner."

"Ah! so my cousin did get the ring when he dove. What ...cality for him to keep it! And you, dear Isabel, oh, how ...an I——"

He endeavored to take her hand, but she broke from him haughtily, and swept into the cabin.

Vainly did he afterward endeavor to change her resolution.

"We may be friends," she said, "but we can never—never marry while you are rich and I am poor. I cannot forget your unworthy suspicion."

Benjamin deserted the vessel on the day after his rascality was discovered, and Bill was glad to be rid of his presence.

Years after, steadily persevering, William Normond contrived to change the resolution of Isabel, who, having by this time inherited a considerable fortune from an old uncle, a sea captain, could not now be accused of marrying for money.

As to Benjamin, he met the fate which often befalls such rascals.

Shipping in a small schooner bound among the South Sea Islands for cocoanut oil, he went ashore one day on liberty, which was granted him with the rest of the crew. Bent upon mischief, and presuming too far upon the good nature of the natives, he entered a hut situated upon a lofty bluff, where the chief, with many of his warriors, was holding council—probably on some topic of grand importance to these untutored savages.

The chief, standing with his back to the newcomer, paid no attention to him, but went on addressing his men.

"Ay, now, is this the way you blue skins treat a civilized being, far superior to yourselves? If you should enter my country, you'd be kicked out for your lack of good breeding!"

"Me no 'zactly understandee," exclaimed the native haughtily, while his black eyes fairly shot blue lightning, "but me no like you come in in this way. If you like take a seat, ah, very good—if you not, ah, quick throw you there!"

Now, Benjamin well knew how impatient are the South Sea Islanders at being interrupted during their councils, and yet it seemed as if some fatal power urged him on further.

"No," he replied, meanwhile showing prudence enough to retreat toward the door. "The white men are not far off, and, should you throw me from this peak, they would kill every one of your tribe."

"Not so," answered the chief, smiling darkly; "the white men can no see you from where now standing. Me throw quick; then when white men come me say that you slip and fell."

Benjamin at once perceived the truth of this argument. He turned deadly pale, then, goaded by the taunting smiles of the young warriors, he shook his fist at them as he still continued retreating, and uttered a scream of derision.

At this the old chief said something to a young brave, who, instantly springing forth with a war club uplifted, pointed toward a rocky path leading down from the summit of the mountain.

The fiery eyes of the young savage made the impertinent coward quail. He endeavored to retreat, but his trembling limbs caused him to stumble with his heel against a rocky projection.

His forward spring to recover his balance was by the native mistaken for an attempted assault, resulting in the unfortunate wretch being struck over the head with the club. Before he could cry out, another blow nearly stunned him, when, scarcely knowing what he did, he struggled fiercely for his life.

Fear and desperation nerved him to almost superhuman strength. At last the native succeeded in pressing him back toward the edge of that cliff, beneath which, far down, yawned many a jagged, pointed pinnacle and spur.

The old chief now held up his club as a signal to the young native to desist; but the latter, stung to madness, gave Ben a sudden push that sent him over the dizzy brink!

His wild cry, resounding far and near, startled his shipmates, who, however, mistook it for that of some bird after its finny prey.

Years after, however, an old native, dying, told the truth.

Search was made for the skeleton of the wretch, but it could not be found, having, probably, been washed away by the merciless tides of old ocean.

By one of those coincidences which occur occasionally, the first man to hear the sad tidings was William, the cousin, who had shipped in a vessel bound on another voyage soon after his return home.

The news shocked and saddened him, notwithstanding the worthless character of the deceased, whose villainy, as stated, had been so promptly exposed.

By the shores of the Connecticut River Squire Normond and his wife now live in one of those old stone houses, which seem to the casual observer the very embodiment of peace and comfort.

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